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ABSTRACT

Volunteer reading aides in the District of Columbia became aware of certain inadequacies suffered by the children with whom they worked. The children had no books of their own, school libraries were inadequate and sometimes nonexistent, public libraries were not easily accessible to the children, etc., etc. A proposal made by one of the volunteers, Mrs. Robert McNamara, evolved into the program Reading Is Fun-damental which is sponsored by the District of Columbia Citizens for Better Public Education organization. The two main objectives of the program are to provide children with books of their own to do with as they please and to give them a freedom of choice in the selection of those books. This report describes the conception of the program, its problems, its techniques, and its successes. (NH)

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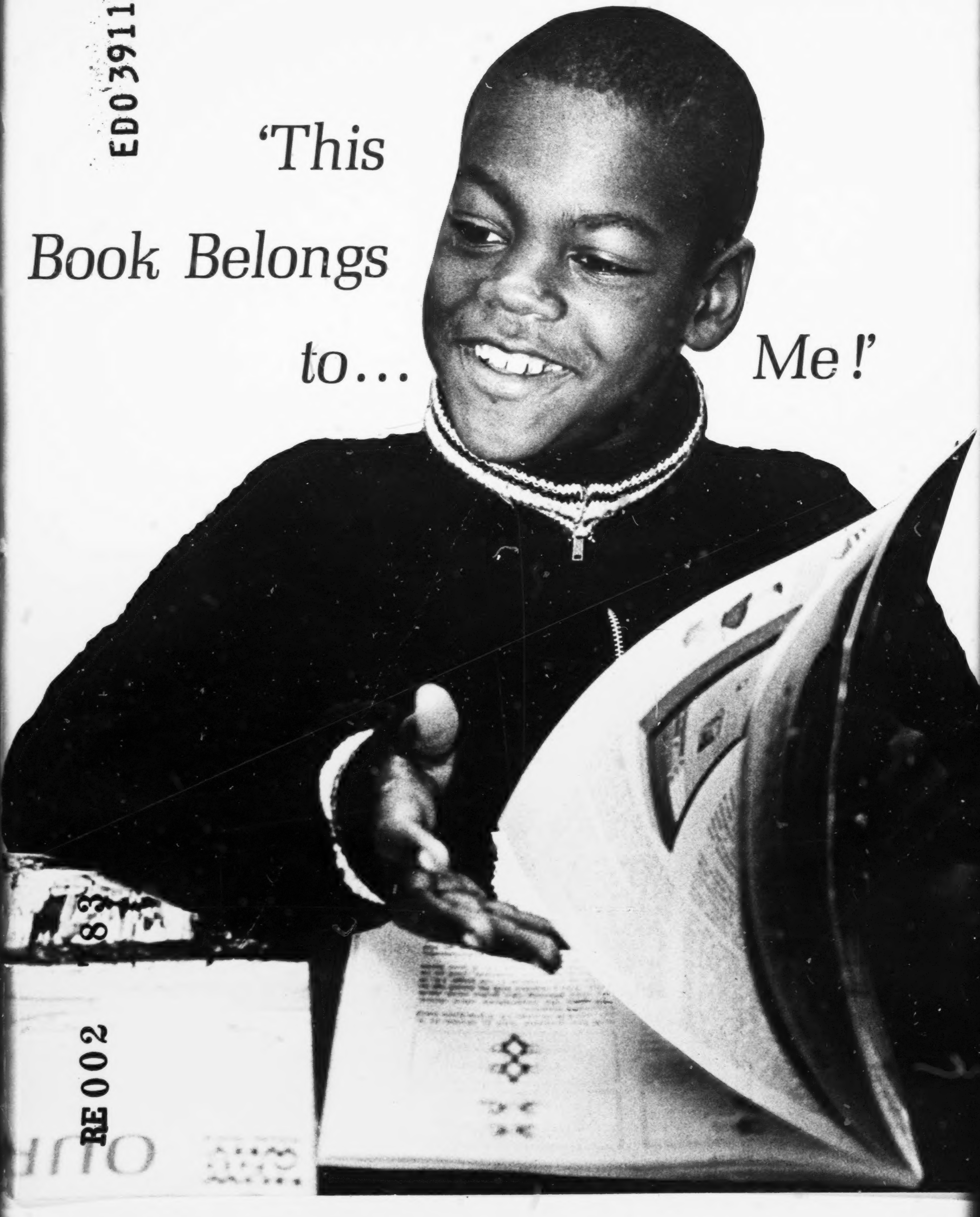
'This Book Belongs to... Me!'



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The photograph on the cover is that of 10-year-old Gregory Mack of Washington, D.C. Gregory started the fourth grade in school with only a second-grade reading ability. In June he was promoted to the fifth grade after having led his class in reading!

The principal of his school said of Greg: "I think he just had no interest in reading, until the Reading Is Fun-damental Program caught his fancy." And, as Greg wrote to the RIF Committee: "I didn't always like to read but now it's fun."

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'This Book Belongs to …Me!'

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A Report
of the
Reading Is Fun-damental Committee

Mrs. Robert S. McNamara,
Chairman

The Reading Is Fun-damental Committee of Washington, D. C. is sponsored by the District of Columbia Citizens for Better Public Education, Inc., and it functioned in cooperation with the D. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers; the Home and School Association; and the Action Committee for D. C. School Libraries.

In Appreciation

This Report of the Reading Is Fun-damental Committee is dedicated to the children of the District of Columbia, whose warm-hearted reception of this project was a constant source of delight to all who worked in every phase of the distribution of books.

In addition, the Reading Is Fun-damental Committee takes this occasion to express its thanks to the individuals, foundations and companies whose contributions made possible the work of the committee. Hundreds of Washingtonians—parents, teachers, principals, and volunteer workers—donated time, effort, intelligence and enthusiasm to the committee so that it might effectively carry out this project. To them all, we express our profound appreciation for sharing in this unique effort to help, through interesting books, to enrich the lives of both children and adults in our capital city.

To my colleagues in the D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education, headed by Mrs. Gilbert Harrison, I voice gratitude for constant help and cooperation. Obviously this work would have been impossible without the interest, devotion and time expended by members of the R I F Committee and its staff. Space precludes naming them all, but I do wish to voice my special appreciation to them, and particularly to Miss Flaxie Pinkett, Mrs. Eleanor Smollar, Mrs. Barbara Atkinson and Mrs. Jane Wagner.

Margy McNamara

March 1968 Mrs. Robert S. McNamara

Contents

I Introduction 1
II Why a RIF Program 4
III Establishing the RIF Committee 6
IV Objectives of RIF 7
V Preparations 8
VI Phase I—RIF School Program
  A. Distribution of Books 12
  B. What RIF Accomplished 28
VII Phase II—RIF Community Program 48
VIII Conclusion 57

Appendices
  A. RIF Committee Members 58
  B. Pre-pack List of Books 60
  C. A Discussion of the RIF Book List 62

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I. *Introduction*

Something new and bright has been added to the home of Gregory Mack, age ten—a gaily painted shelf made of a milk crate to hold the books he received from the Reading Is Fun-damental Program. The first book he chose was the first book he had ever owned. It was about a circus.

"It made me laugh," he said.

"I think Greg just had no interest in reading until the RIF program caught his fancy," said his principal. "Then Greg developed a hunger for books and showed a marked improvement in his reading ability."

Thousands of other children of low income families in the District of Columbia have had experiences similar to Greg's. For many it was the first time they had been able to select and keep a book they wanted.

A total of 205,000 books have been distributed to 41,000 children in 61 public elementary schools located in neighborhoods where the median family income is below $5,000.

How did it start? By the experience of a woman who cared. Mrs. Robert McNamara, working as a volunteer reading aide, was tutoring two boys. She found they had never owned a single book! She became determined to make it possible for school children to have books of their own—books that would be *fun* for children to read.

As a member of the Executive Committee of the D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education (DCCBPE), Mrs. McNamara presented the problem and a proposal. Her suggestion resulted in a "Reading Is Fun-damental" (RIF) program organized and sponsored by DCCBPE in cooperation with the D. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers, Home and School Associations and the Action Committee for D. C. School Libraries.

RIF gave children access to a wide variety of interesting and exciting books—books they could select and own "just for fun." RIF believed that owning a book of one's personal choice helped provide a motivation for reading. Reports from principals and teachers confirmed this.

"Having been one of those children who always had a book in her hand, I was growing weary of trying to prod my charges into reading for pure enjoyment," said one teacher. "Now it's my happy problem to interest these same children in putting down their fun books for a few minutes to pick up a text-book."

The pride the children displayed in their ownership of books, their open joy in discovering that reading is fun, the many reports of books shared with families and friends—these were the signs indicating the RIF school project had succeeded, that it had filled the emptiness which, sad to say, often exists in many homes and neighborhoods in every part of the nation.

Three distributions were made at the schools. Each child received at least five books. The distribution of books required the combined effort of many volunteers. Volunteers from the RIF Committee, parents, principals and teachers worked together to distribute books in a variety of ways.

A distribution of books in June, 1967, completed the "school phase" of the project. In accordance with its commitment to the Ford Foundation, DCCBPE developed new programs for book distributions during the summer of 1967. The Ford Foundation, in its grant made in February, 1967, directed DCCBPE to use a variety of community agencies, as well as the schools, "to try out ways and means for both children and adults to acquire books in a systematic fashion."

A "Reading Is Funmobile," purchased with funds from the Ford Motor Company Fund, was used to distribute books on a regular weekly basis to children and adults involved in various community summer projects. These included: church-community day camp programs; Head Start programs including both parents and children; housing development day camps and lending libraries for residents; recreation area programs.

The Funmobile is a gaily decorated delivery truck. It is equipped not only with shelves stocked with attractive books, but in addition a blasting "ooga" horn. The "Funmobile" was greeted with an enthusiasm and excitement rivaling the reception usually accorded only to the "Good Humor" truck!

Several of the summer programs were expanded during the fall and winter. New community programs were developed, many in the neighborhood of schools in which RIF previously distributed books. This gave RIF an opportunity again to reach many of the same children and to offer the continuing experience of selecting books of their own for fun.

A community Laundromat in one neighborhood was stocked with book racks which were refilled as needed. Outside the Laundromat, one Saturday a month, the Funmobile distributed books to about 400 children and adults. Libraries in housing developments were provided with books and the

Funmobile made regular book distributions on Saturdays to recipients ranging all the way from the very young through senior citizens. Book racks at the Juvenile Court were stocked and refilled as needed. A neighborhood museum was supplied with books, many of which were related as nearly as possible to current exhibits. Books were provided for a wide variety of tutoring projects and adult education classes.

Space limitations preclude listing all the community programs that were developed. All will continue through to June, 1968 and hopefully longer.

RIF has given thousands of children and adults access to the wonderful world of books. It has provided the pleasures and rewards of reading which should be the birthright of every person in our affluent nation.

The RIF Committee hopes that this report will help others to develop similar programs. The programs need not be large in scope. A sum as little as $250 could provide 660 books for children in a small school, or books for both children and adults in a local neighborhood center or housing development. Of course, to achieve the greatest value, the program should be carried out in depth—to get as many books as possible to each recipient.

The record of RIF's experiences will help others to learn of the difficulties involved. They are many and challenging. But those who participate in a similar program will also share with us the exhilarating experience of opening a new world—the world of books—to the eyes of children and adults. Young or old, these recipients learn for the first time that "reading can be fun."

Those of us who have known all our lives how to make friends with books find new satisfaction in showing others, who have never had the opportunity, the pleasure that comes from reading. Reading is fun; in our democracy, furthermore, reading is more than fun—it is fundamental to the continuing development of citizenship responsibilities.

II. *Why a RIF Program*

Volunteer reading aides in the District of Columbia public schools have become aware during the past few years that many of the children with whom they work have no books of their own.

School libraries are inadequate, and in many cases nonexistent. Public libraries are distant from the homes of many youngsters. Parents often discourage use of public libraries because they fear the high cost of replacing lost books. Classroom texts hold little interest or appeal as reading matter. Rarely are children in elementary grades permitted to take school books home to read.

A broad range of interesting and attractive paperback books was made available to the School Volunteer Program. They were given to the relatively few children being helped. They stimulated immediate and enthusiastic response.

Mrs. Robert McNamara was dismayed—as we mentioned earlier—that two of her special pupils had never owned a book, and she decided to find a way for thousands of children to acquire books of their own. Her determination evolved into a proposal which she presented in April, 1966, to the District of Columbia Citizens for Better Public Education (DCCBPE), of whose executive committee she was an active member.

"I believe every school child in Washington should have at least a few books of his own—books that he can read, re-read and enjoy," she told the group. "Many children in the District of Columbia cannot afford books. Neither do they have easy access to a wide variety of attractive, exciting books.

"The main objective of this project is to stimulate an interest in and an enjoyment of reading. To this end, inexpensive paperback books of high interest level will be purchased and distributed to children in the elementary schools, where motivation to read should begin. These books will be the children's to take home and keep," she said.

Thus was born the "Reading Is Fun-damental" program. The need for the project had been documented in a study of the public school system by the Congressional Task Force on Antipoverty in the District of Columbia. This study identified the incidence of reading deficiency as the most critical problem confronting the D. C. public schools.

"No other factor in the entire school program contributes more to a person's remaining in poverty than his inability to read," the study noted.

A summer pilot project conducted in D. C. public schools showed that reading skill was significantly affected by reader attitude. Reader attitude, in turn, was influenced by the accessibility of interesting books. Students who had been regarded as slow learners or reluctant readers proved to be neither slow nor reluctant when provided with books that interested them. Students of all ability levels reported they learned more by reading something they chose for themselves —something they liked.

III. Establishing the RIF Committee

A crucial community need had been identified. A creative solution had been conceived.

DCCBPE agreed to sponsor the Reading Is Fun-damental Committee as an action program in cooperation with the District of Columbia Congress of Parents and Teachers, the Home and School Associations and the Action Committee for the District of Columbia School Libraries. Mrs. McNamara met with 45 persons representing the four organizations, as well as other local organizations interested in the public schools. The Reading Is Fun-damental Committee was formed from this group. *(For a list of the members and groups represented see Appendix A.)*

Support from the superintendent of schools was sought. He gave his wholehearted endorsement, pledging the cooperation of the schools.

Seven major problems faced the committee:

1. How would the project be funded?

2. How would the books be ordered? Where could they be stored?

3. How would the books be distributed to the school children?

4. How could the interest of the children be stimulated?

5. How could parents and school personnel be encouraged to become involved?

6. How could the ideas of enjoyment of reading and pride in ownership of books be communicated to thousands of children and adults?

7. How could children and parents be encouraged to develop home libraries with inexpensive books?

I LEARN TO COLOR

Five committees were formed to grapple with the questions. They were the Executive Committee, the policy-making body; the Fund Raising Committee, the Publicity and Public Relations Committee, the Book Selection and Ordering Committee and the Book Distribution Committee.

By mid-June, 1966, less than 60 days from the time of the original proposal, members of RIF were given their committee assignments.

IV. Objectives of RIF

A child who does not learn to read in the early grades is handicapped in all future learning. If he does not discover the joy and pleasure of books while he is young, it is likely to escape him forever.

Recognition of these factors caused the Reading Is Fundamental Committee to concentrate its project on the elementary grades.

Two primary targets were established.

The first was ownership. Children must be given books of their own which they could take home to keep, to read, to share as they liked. RIF believed that ownership would help foster the joy of reading, and develop a responsibility toward books.

The second target was self-selection. The children must have freedom of choice. A broad range of high-interest books had to be made available. The adventure of shopping among the books to select just the right one for the pleasure of reading had to be encouraged. The act of selection, in itself, can be a valuable learning experience for a child.

By its book distributions, the committee hoped to stimulate more extensive use of school and public libraries. Parents, it was hoped, would become aware of the availability of low cost paperbound books for home libraries. RIF believed that choosing interesting, exciting books of their own could kindle in children a desire to improve reading skills.

Through showing that there is a great demand by youngsters for books of real interest to them, RIF set forth an intention to stimulate and provide incentives for the publication of a greater selection of paperback books for children in the elementary grades.

THE STORY ABOUT PING

V. *Preparations*

Major policy problems were involved in developing the RIF program. Among them:

1. Which children?

RIF believes every school child in Washington should have books of his own. There were 92,830 public school children in 134 elementary schools in the District of Columbia in the school year 1966-67. The committee would have liked to have given books to all of them.

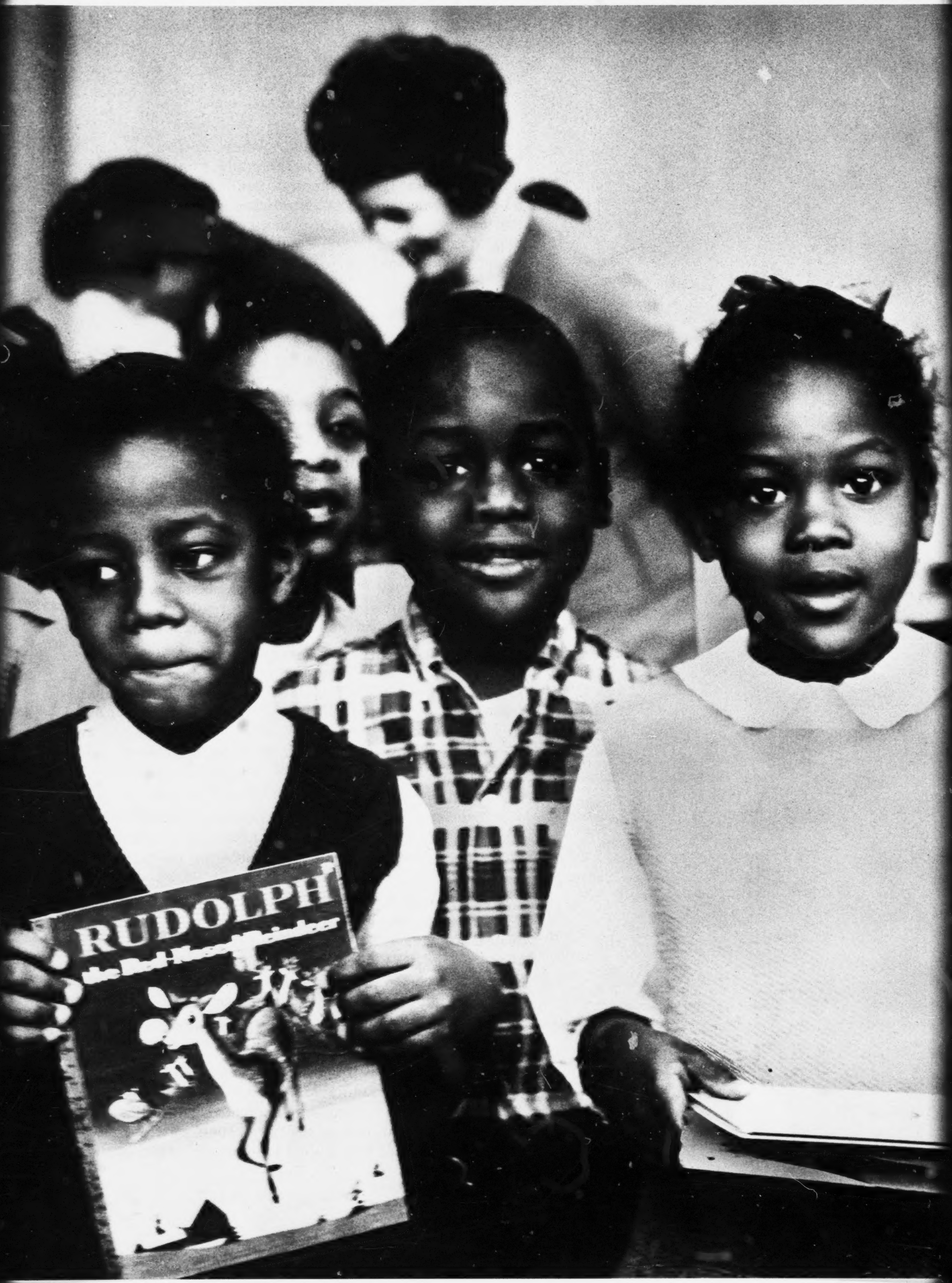
But finances were a limiting factor. The project could be of value only if it were done "in depth", which meant giving more books to fewer children. Five books for each child were determined to be the minimum that could be provided in an effective program.

Public schools were the best available medium for distribution. The greatest number of needy children could be reached through the schools. RIF wanted to give books to children who had none, but the committee was determined not to set them apart as recipients of charity. Once a school was selected, every child in it would receive books. There would be no exceptions.

2. Which schools?

A knotty problem developed in the selection of schools to be included in the project. Suggested criteria included: (1) extent of reading retardation; (2) equitable geographic distribution; (3) absence of school library facilities, and (4) neighborhood median income. The need for a single criterion was determined to be essential. Neighborhood median family income was selected.

The latest available median family income figures were


RUDOLPH
the Red-Nosed Reindeer

found in the book "D. C. Public School System—A Capsule Review, October, 1965." From this study, 61 schools in neighborhoods with median annual family incomes of below $5,000 were designated as distribution centers. These schools had an enrollment of more than 40,000 children. Each child was to receive five books. Total distribution would be more than 200,000 books.

3. What kind of funding?

The first question that arose was whether to finance the project with public or private funds.

Under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the District of Columbia Board of Education was receiving funds for a Reading Incentive Program for secondary schools, which involved three high schools and six junior high schools. This program provided paperback books for students in secondary schools only. No similar program was being contemplated for the elementary schools.

Emphasis in requesting funds for elementary schools under the Education Act had been placed on the purchase of text books, the employment of special personnel to develop programs of improved coordination between school and home, and the identification of potential dropouts.

RIF concluded it would need to tap private resources. An original estimate placed the cost of the project at $150,000—$125,000 for books, and the balance for administration. This estimate was based on a preliminary project goal of distributing five books to each of 60,000 children. The actual cost of the project, as finally limited to 41,000 children receiving 205,000 books, was approximately $100,000, about $80,000 for books, the balance for administration.

Requests for funds were submitted by DCCBPE to the Old Dominion and the Ford Foundations early in June, 1966. The requests were based on a project for the school year 1966-67.

Old Dominion responded with a grant of $25,000. The Old Dominion grant permitted employment of a temporary project director and the placement of an initial order for books so the first distribution could be made in the fall. Ford indicated the possibility of a grant later in the year to develop a pilot project for a national program.

The National Home Library fund contributed $11,000 and the Cafritz Foundation, $2,500.

The RIF project proposal was submitted in September to about 90 small family foundations. Each was asked to donate $1,000. Following public announcement of the project on television, radio and in the newspapers on November 1, an appeal for funds was mailed to approximately 1,000 business, professional, labor, civic and religious organizations in Washington. Spontaneous individual donations resulted from newspaper, radio and television publicity.

DCCBPE provided office space and equipment, as well as stenographic and clerical assistance, until RIF could cover its own operational expenses within DCCBPE office facilities.

4. How to tell the community?

RIF knew it was important for the greater Washington community to know of its program. Furthermore, the message had to avoid creating the impression that RIF is "just another give-away program".

RIF was able to recruit public relations experts to serve on its Public Relations Committee. These people helped to publicize the program constructively and effectively, and they performed a number of other services. RIF stationery, brochures and pictures, for example, were designed by them and printing was obtained at no expense.

The program was officially introduced to the community November 1 at a carefully planned press conference. RIF gave very wide distribution to its first press release. This was followed by personal contacts with newspaper, radio and television representatives.

The first book distribution was made two days later at two schools, Lennox Annex and Syphax. Our public relations volunteers were effective in attracting reporters from newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations to the distributions. And the children put the message across.

As "Rambler", a columnist for the Washington *Evening Star,* wrote: "Rambler has seen small children get excited over free candy or balloons or a ride of some kind. He had no idea they could get so worked up about free books. . . . It was good to see children grabbing and shoving for books."

RIF worked hard also at the difficult task of dispelling the image of the group as a modern counterpart of "lady bountiful".

All persons involved in the distribution—volunteers, school personnel, parents, children—contributed toward avoiding RIF is being looked upon as just another give-away program. An editorial in the *Washington Post* viewed the RIF Committee work as "a model of enlightened cooperation between citizens and schools to teach the most valuable of lessons. It is a gift, not of books, but of the love of books."

RIF became increasingly aware that the response of the children had to be seen and heard to be appreciated. Book distributions had to be experienced to show the full flavor of interest, excitement and enthusiasm.

A public relations counselor, retained on a part time basis in March, 1967, to meet the increased requests for information from all over the nation, convinced us of the importance of filming the "reality" of a book distribution. A professional documentary photographer shot hundreds of feet of film. Television stations gave us reels of film they had taken of the program in action.

DCCBPE invited parents and other members of the community to a "Reading Is Fun-damental" meeting in May, 1967. Color movies filmed at schools during distributions were shown. Samples of the books were exhibited. Reading experts introduced by Mrs. Kathryn Lumley, director of the D. C. Public Schools Reading Clinic, demonstrated ways in which parents could help their children to read better. They were shown how the reading climate in the home could be developed and improved.

5. How to select the books?

Several factors were involved in the selection of books. Cost, of course, was an important consideration; first, because of the economics of funding the project, and, second, because of RIF's desire to acquaint children and parents with interesting books obtainable at low cost. The books that RIF selected were mainly paperbacks or inexpensive hardbacks, within a price range of 25 to 75 cents. A few were more expensive; the most expensive cost $1.45.

Interests and reading levels were important considerations. A study was made of researched lists relating reading levels to interest levels, particularly of books aimed at motivating reluctant readers.

Size of the books and the gaiety of their cover designs were additional factors in selecting paperbacks. RIF wanted the children to find them attractive and easy to handle.

Books selected for the first distribution came mainly from a D. C. Public Schools Reading Clinic list titled "Paperback Books Found Useful for Elementary Grades." For kindergarten and the lower grades, Golden Shape, Wonder Books, Little Goldens and Easy Readers were added to the selection. Fun, activity, and "How and Why" science books were included.

The original order was made early in August to ensure delivery in time to start distribution in the fall. The Reading Clinic list was sent to the Book Selection Committee. Suggested titles were added.

Most of the selections were made with the approval of the supervising director of the Reading Clinic. As a representative of the public schools, her role on the committee was important. She proved to be invaluable in her flexible approach and attitude toward book selection. She believes that meeting the child's interests is of prime importance.

"Good books and good literature should be included," she said. "But to stimulate the children's interest a wide range of exciting stories from Batman to Mark Twain should be selected, including books on science experiments, hobbies, cooking, sports, sewing, puzzles, games and other activities."

Catalog guides used in later selections were: The Paperback Goes to School, Elementary Edition, 1966-67, Bureau of Independent Publishers & Distributors; Paperbound Book Guide for Elementary Schools, 1966; Publishers' Weekly and Library Journal; Readers' Choice Catalog; Scholastic Book Service, The Negro American in Paperback, 1967, National Education Assn., and trade catalogs of about 15 publishers of children's paperback books.

Children's preferences indicated that the size of type, the number and quality of illustrations and the solidity of construction were highly important. Most later selections were made only after publishers' samples were reviewed with these factors in mind.

At a meeting of the Book Selection Committee in January, 1967, a great many samples were reviewed. Recommendations were made. The first distribution had revealed that science, low reading level story books and fun and activity books—with lots of colorful pictures and illustrations—were in greatest demand.

Members of the committee agreed that the main problem was finding books to meet the demonstrated demand. Emphasis was placed on locating books that would attract the children—*on getting the right book to the right child.*

RIF was challenged to produce a selection of inexpensive books that would be of high interest for low achievement-level readers between the ages of 5 and 13.

RIF was providing books for children the majority of whom are Negroes living in low income urban neighborhoods. Finding books with plots and settings in environments that would be pertinent and meaningful to these children was extremely difficult. All available paperbacks about Ne-

gro history, biographies of prominent Negroes and stories about Negro children were included in the selection. But far too few are being published.

It is the hope of the RIF Committee that its program, coupled with the experience of other similar projects throughout the country, will stimulate sufficient demand to encourage publishers to provide a greater and more satisfactory selection of paperback books at low prices for children in the elementary grades, where learning and enjoyment of reading must begin. The publishers must also provide books with subjects of more interest to urban Negro children and children of low-income families in other groups . . . for instance, Indian, Appalachian, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican. *(A discussion of the R I F Book List appears in Appendix B.)*

6. How to purchase, store and deliver the books?

Exploration of the multitude of problems involved in ordering more than 200,000 books directly from various publishers led RIF to negotiations with Mr. Joseph Ottenstein, head of the District News Company, the largest distributor of paperbacks in the Washington area. Mr. Ottenstein had long been interested in distributing paperbacks in the schools. District News was handling the book distributions for the public school system's Title I Reading Incentive Program for secondary school students.

Mr. Ottenstein took a vital interest in the R I F project. He agreed that District News would purchase, package, store and deliver all books at a 25 percent discount. He also offered free use of the company's bookmobile trailer. RIF was to be billed for books only after they had been delivered to distribution centers.

Procedures for most efficient handling of orders were developed with District News personnel assigned to work with the RIF program. District News agreed to prepare pre-packs as requested by RIF. Selected titles and special groupings of limited numbers of books were placed in cartons designated as pre-packs. They were given specific letter designations for respective groupings as follows:

Pre-pack A—75 Shape Books (Golden)—3 ea. of 25 titles—Grades K-3
Pre-pack B—51 Wonder Books (G&D)—3 ea. of 17 titles—Grades K-3
Pre-pack C—60 Easy Readers (G&D)—3 ea. of 20 titles—Grades 1-4
Pre-pack D—42 Tempo Books (G&D)—2 ea. of 21 titles—Grades 4-6
Pre-pack E—39 Scholastic —3 ea. of 13 titles—Grades K-3

(A complete pre-pack list with identification key appears in Appendix C.)

The pre-pack groupings had several advantages. Among them:

☐ They provided a greater variety of selection. Schools served had enrollments ranging from 200 to 1,500. Having a variety of books pre-packed in relatively small numbers made it possible for the smaller schools to have almost as wide a selection as the larger.

☐ Grouping by grade level gave the volunteers distributing the books some knowledge of the estimated reading levels. Age range-of-interest level, as well as grade level, was assigned to each prepack.

This, of course, was only an estimate based on the best information available. It was not necessarily accurate as applied to individual children.

☐ Groupings by category helped more easily to identify books for specific requests. Separate pre-packs would be ordered of science, biography, project, fun and activity books from different publishers.

☐ Pre-packs simplified ordering for school distribution, billing and record keeping.

Preparation of pre-packs at District News proved to contribute greater difficulties than anticipated. It demanded a considerable number of man-hours of work, and subsequent errors in the packing process plagued the operation for some time.

An appeal to publishers to pre-pack books prior to shipment met with compliance from the majority. In many instances the identifying pre-pack letter was stamped on the carton by the publisher.

Ready-made pre-packs offered by publishers were purchased as often as possible. Little Golden, G & D Early Start Readers and Follets-Maxton Activity books were available in ready-made pre-packs. This facilitated prompt delivery. It is recommended if the majority of the titles are acceptable.

Order sheets prepared in the RIF office were sent to District News identifying numbers of specific pre-packs to be sent to each school and designating the delivery date. When possible, these were sent at least a week ahead of delivery date. A copy of the order was also sent to the RIF distribution captain for verification of accurate delivery.

RIF's agreement with District News included a promise that no books would be returned once they were delivered. RIF assumed full responsibility for the handling of all surplus books from each distribution. This simplified billing. Surplus books could be reassembled and redirected more effectively by volunteers and the project director.

Due to limited funds, early orders were placed for not more than 50 cartons of a given pre-pack. Because of the long delay in shipments and the resultant distribution problems, orders were more than doubled as soon as financing permitted. District News at times stored a considerable RIF stock, at some inconvenience to the firm.

Subsequent experience in dealing with publishers directly convinced RIF of the wisdom of operating this phase of the project through District News. The company was highly cooperative in providing the necessary facilities and manpower and in resolving problems as they arose. The project could not have been as successful without them.

The following are estimates based on our experience of the approximate number of books that can be purchased for a given sum of money:

1,325	books for	$ 500
2,650	books for	$ 1,000
15,250	books for	$ 5,000
26,500	books for	$10,000
40,000	books for	$15,000

VI. Phase I—

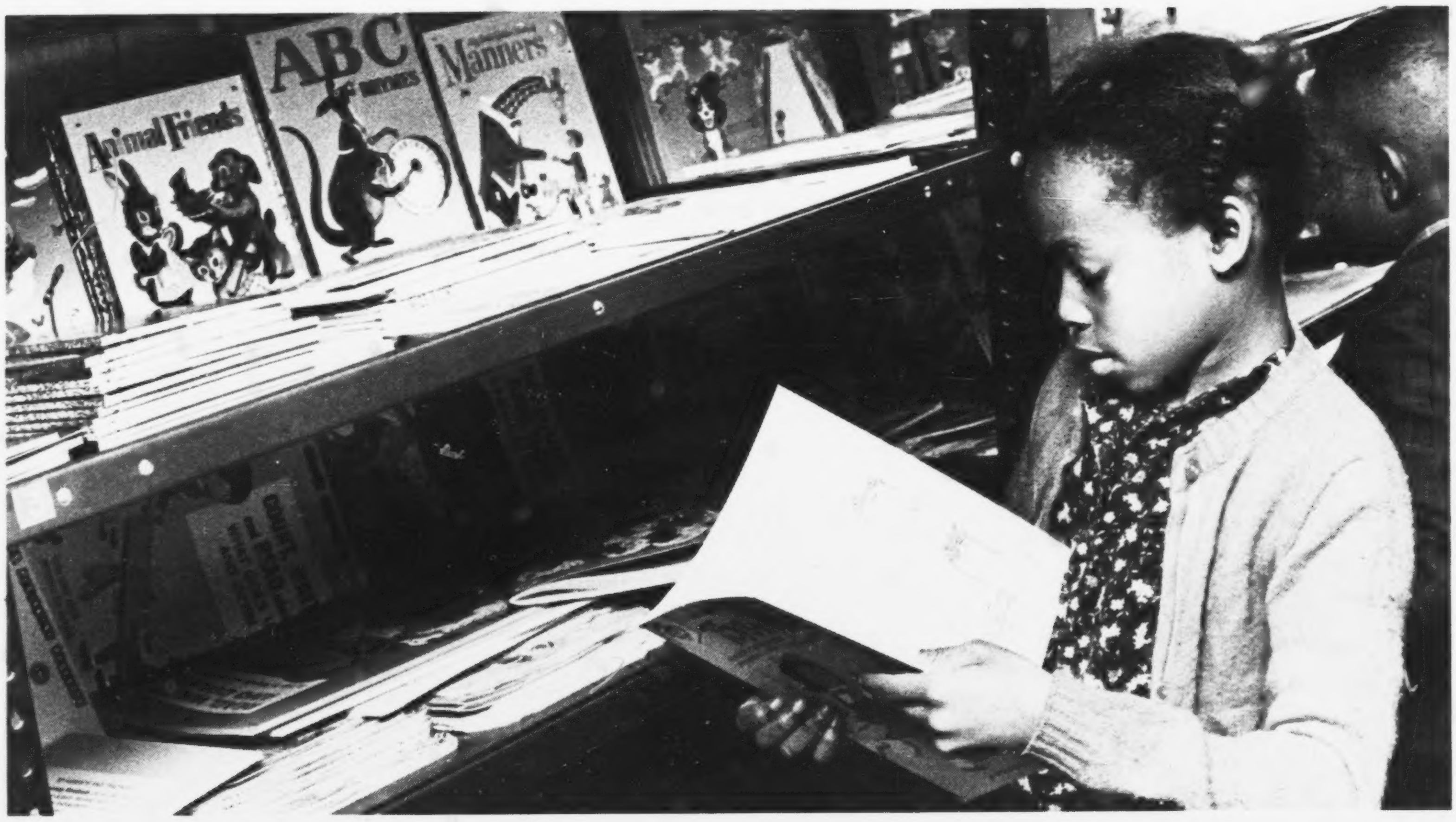
RIF School Program

A. *Distribution of Books*

RIF recognized early that the schools would provide the best distribution centers. More children in more areas could most readily be reached at the schools. Because the committee was sensitive to the overwhelming burdens already carried by school personnel, committee members were determined that this voluntary project would not impose any additional workload.

Clearance was obtained from the superintendent's office to contact school principals to make arrangements for book distributions in their schools. Memoranda were sent by the school administration to principals advising them of the selection of their schools as participants in the RIF program.

Three distributions were made during the school year. As problems developed, plans had to be changed to find solu-



tions in subsequent distributions. Methods and procedures were changed as the result of experience. Reactions varied. Because of these factors, a report on each distribution is detailed below.

1. First Distribution

Preparation and Planning

Members of the committee and other volunteers were assigned as "Distribution Captains" for each school. The captains were encouraged to use their creativity and imagination in making preparations. Their efforts were to be directed toward:

- Publicizing distribution in advance, to build enthusiasm and anticipation of "Reading Is Fun Day".
- Encouraging school personnel to instruct children on how to browse and select books of their own choice and specific interest.
- Stimulating reading enjoyment and pride of ownership in the children.
- Involving parents in distributions to the fullest extent possible.

No uniform procedures were detailed. Too many variables were involved. Still unknown were the attitudes of school personnel, the extent of cooperation that could be expected, what school facilities were available and whether favorable school-parent relationships existed.

Distribution captains were instructed to operate within the framework of the principal's attitude toward his school. Some were quite flexible; others were structured and con-

trolling. Favorable response of the principal was important to the success of the program. Although RIF hoped all would come eventually to accept its concepts, the committee initially worked to accommodate the principal's views and attitudes without losing the essence of RIF's purpose.

Prior to distribution the captain was responsible for: obtaining enrollment information—apportionment by grades and general reading level; planning date and method of distributions—by bookmobile or delivery direct to school; arranging with principal or assigned school liaison person use of most favorable available space within school; developing pre-distribution plans to stimulate children's interest such as assemblies, exhibits, posters, art work, and reading to classes.

Methods and Techniques

The large trailer lined with book shelves made available by the District News Company was used at six schools during the first distribution. Volunteers found three disadvantages. First, the channel-type layout limited the number of children who could be serviced at any one time. Second, it was inadequately heated. Third, lighting depended on the availability of outlets at the schools.

Several captains, however, preferred using the mobile unit—because with fewer children in a group, they could guide and encourage self-selection. This also gave the volunteers a better chance to talk with the individual children—to get to know them.

A more inviting atmosphere for browsing and choosing books was achieved when a library room, assembly hall or lunchroom was available in the school. Arranged on long tables, books could be displayed more attractively and effectually. Volunteers, parents and school personnel had an opportunity to work together more closely—and more satisfactorily.

Prior to a distribution, some captains and team members visited classrooms to tell the children about the books. More often, teachers prepared children for 'Reading Is Fun Day''. Captains often talked to each group as they arrived at the distribution center. RIF learned that the achievement level of its objectives generally coincided with the degree of involvement of the captain and his team.

A brightly colored book mark was used to reach parents with information about the availability of inexpensive books for home libraries. It was given to each child to take home with his book. Printed on the book mark was the message:

> "There's something NEW in your house today . . .
> a Book. Read it, enjoy it with your children,
> keep it. You will find more at the drug store,
> the food store, the 5 and 10, the library . . .
> Reading Is Fun-damental."

Book orders for each school were based on enrollment of students by grade and the general reading level. The first distribution was exploratory. RIF needed to find the children's reading preferences. Since most of the books were distributed just prior to Christmas, the more popular books were Christmas-oriented. Enough was learned of reading and and interest levels for respective schools, however, to guide RIF in preparation of orders for succeeding distributions.

The captain and his team were responsible for checking book orders, unpacking and displaying books, repacking the surplus books after distribution and returning them to a central station. As many as 100 surplus books were sent to each school to assure that every child—even those receiving books last—would have an opportunity for selection.

The captain's final responsibility was to file a brief written report with the committee describing procedures followed, problems encountered and impressions received. An early effort to systematize an evaluation procedure proved unwieldy and was abandoned.

Problems and Solutions

Project operations were not without problems. Delivery schedules sometimes ran afoul a disabled truck. Since children were positively encouraged to choose whichever books they wanted, there was an occasional imbalance of choice resulting in a shortage of books for a particular grade group. With multiple deliveries scheduled for the same day, there were occasional mix-ups between schools.

These situations were quickly remedied through a relay of phone calls among captains, the project director and District News Company. With the cooperation of the distributor, project machinery was kept flexible. Every effort was made to serve the individual requirements of each school. Efficiency of operation varied widely among the schools. This reflected the extent and quality of communication between the team captain, his volunteer assistants and school personnel.

A recurrent problem was arrangement of books for display. Should they be displayed in graded categories, such as K-3 and 4-6, or should there be an intermingling of titles without regard to grade level? The former serves as a guide for pupils to appropriately graded books. The latter permits children in the upper grades who read at a lower level to select low-level books without embarrassment.

If the children were permitted self-selection, neither system proved restrictive. Both methods were successful when all children had an open choice.

To what degree should children be helped in book selection?

Pupils, especially those in the lower grades, might be directed to certain books of either suitable grade level or possible interest. RIF insisted that no child, however, should be told which book he could or could not select to read and own. When teachers—reacting as parents frequently do—selected books for their children, team captains made every effort to persuade them of the value of self-selection. Because this was a rare experience for most of the children it was suggested to the teachers that dictating choice would rob the child of the pleasure and pride involved.

Observing a teacher take a book out of a child's hand and give him another—or send him back to get a book "more suitable that you can read"—was a disturbing experience.

A little boy in tears, hugging a "How and Why" science book, said his teacher told him to get a book for "little children". He obviously couldn't read it. But just as obviously the pictures and subject matter must have appealed to him. Quite possibly someone at home—a parent, brother or sister—would read it to him. Fortunately the teacher was persuaded and the boy marched proudly off with a possession—a book—of his choice.

To emphasize his pride of ownership, each child was given an attractive bookplate to paste in the front of his book, and urged to write his own name on it.

Desite all RIF efforts, a certain number of teachers never did get the message. One told her pupils to take "Littlest Angel" because it was to be part of a literature class the following week. Some children asked captains if they could take another book because their teacher had told them they had to leave the book of their choice in school until after Christmas.

RIF volunteers sympathized with the teachers' need for supplemental materials in the classroom and were pleased with their interest in the books. In a few instances, when a specific request was directed to the volunteer, he tried to meet it. Thus RIF supplied science books on atomic energy to a class of sixth graders at the request of a teacher who reported that their science text did not have information on atomic energy!

RIF's primary purpose, however, was to stimulate the pride and joy of book ownership. Denial of the right to take books home to do with as they pleased certainly detracted, in the case of some children, from the joy, spontaneity and pleasure of the experience.

A most important aspect of the program was the atmosphere and pacing of the book distributions. RIF volunteers wanted the pace to be relaxed and informal, with the children allowed enough time to browse and to talk freely as they reacted to the books.

Too often teachers inhibited the children. One told her

READING IS FUN-MOBILE
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students before they entered the bookmobile: "keep quiet, don't say one word. Select your books and get off as quickly as possible. Let's show how quickly and quietly we can get through." Well intended, no doubt, but hardly a directive conducive to stimulating fun and enjoyment of books.

Under R I F auspices, some 175 volunteers participated in the first distribution of books between November 3 and December 15, 1966, to children in all but eight of the 61 schools. Children in the remaining schools received their books in January, 1967. Some of the volunteers were parents of children in the chosen schools. Some were parents from "sister" schools. Some were single people who worked or lived in the neighborhood. Some were parish workers, and some were members of sponsoring organizations.

At a meeting of more than 100 of the volunteers on January 10, 1967, person after person rose to share experiences and describe feelings they had about their participation. Everyone looked forward to the second distribution and many offered practical suggestions which were adopted for the future. One mother expressed appreciation on behalf of the school she had served; she added that her own family was particularly fortunate in that they had five children attending the school. This meant they now had five books at home!

2. Second Distribution

Preparation and Planning

The second distribution was directed by volunteers, since the project director had resigned to take a permanent job. A reorientation meeting was held for distribution captains. Some were reassigned; new captains were recruited; minor changes in procedures were made. The main emphasis was placed on strengthening the effectiveness of distributions in line with RIF philosophy.

Distribution captains were urged to stress the RIF "fun to read, fun to own" philosophy. The program was geared to provide an opportunity for a child to select books of his own choice, to own, to take home. Parent participation in distribution was to be encouraged. The need for a relaxed atmosphere for the child was to be emphasized.

Each child was to be given the opportunity to select two books at both the second and third distributions to ensure that RIF's promise of five books for each child before the end of the school year was kept.

Methods and Procedures

Being given the choice of two books may have been one reason the children responded even more enthusiastically during the second distribution. Another possible reason was the greater variety. The number of different pre-packs had increased from 23 to 74, and as many as 400 surplus books were delivered to each school. Still another factor was the more important role RIF captains played in planning distributions. They were encouraged by the response to the first distribution, and were delighted to find school personnel eager for their return.

A number of captains reported they had talked with each group to stimulate interest, arouse enthusiasm and drive home the importance of the children making their own selections. The captains tried to schedule distribution so each class had adequate browsing time. The teams began to use colorful, attractive posters, pictures and signs to help create a gay atmosphere and to enliven some of the drab rooms used for the book distribution. To whet appetites, some volunteers read parts of books to classes before students made their selections. Captains and school personnel were entering into a spirit of fun and enjoyment—of building an interest and love of books—not just participating in a giveaway program.

Children were impressed that RIF had kept its word and had returned. An amazingly large number remembered the title of the book they had chosen at the first distribution.

The story of Greg Mack was brought to RIF's attention during the second distribution. The captain at his school, who as a volunteer aide had worked with Greg and his younger brother, was impressed with the spectacular change in Greg's attitude toward reading. At the first distribution he had selected a Tempo book, "Circus Punk", the story of a boy who ran away to join a circus. The boy's experiences were highly amusing despite his troubles. This appealed to Greg.

"It was funny and made me laugh," he said.

Greg, a fourth grader, had read at the second grade level and had been indifferent to his school work. By the time of the second distribution, he was reading fourth grade books.

Greg had never had books in his home. Now he wanted to start a home library. The principal gave him several books —most of them old basal readers—and suggested that Greg paint a box to be used as a book shelf. His two choices at the second distribution were "Skip" and "Black Treasure". They are rated at the 5-6 grade reading level.

RIF volunteers gave Greg several more books to help fill his rather empty book shelf. He agreed to write for more when he finished reading them. A few weeks later, he did write—and told which of the books he liked "very, very much . . . and the titles I want are a book about school and I want a arithmetic book and a book about states. And a couple for baby brother so I can read to him at Night in bed."

One principal suggested that RIF display samples of books at his school which the children could then order. Because of the pre-pack method of ordering books, District News felt filling specific book orders would be extremely complicated.

The distribution captain and her team were not sure they could handle individual orders. A compromise system was developed in which RIF supplied books for a regular distribution, but excluded 28 titles which could be used as samples for orders. All of these titles were rated in the 4-6 grade reading level.

The display was set up in a part of the building separate from the regular distribution room, to avoid confusion. Children in grades 4-6 were told about the ordering system. Still there was considerable confusion. All the children had been told they would receive two books at this second distribution. Understandably, it was difficult for the children to grasp that if they ordered one book, this took the place of a second book to be picked up then and there.

This would have been a more satisfactory test of the idea of selection by special order if that had been the only method used. The double system, however, proved to be time-consuming and demanding of a carefully structured procedure, as well as considerable staff, at both the distribution point and at District News. Forty-eight books were ordered. This required the splitting of six pre-packs. In addition, RIF volunteers were dubious that getting THE book each child wanted would compensate for the disappointment of not being able to take two books with him then and there.

During this distribution, the 100,000th book was selected by a bright-eyed second grader. He received a large hardback picture dictionary to honor the occasion. He also shared in the fun of handing out similar dictionaries to each of his classmates.

We had discovered that few classrooms had enough dictionaries. Many had none. It was rare that a child had one of his own. An inexpensive paperback picture dictionary that had been added to the book list was extremely popular. RIF found, incidentally, that most of the paperback dictionaries available were too difficult for the majority of the children.

Problems and Solutions

The chief problem of this distribution was that many of the schools ran short of books for lower reading levels. This was remedied by later sending additional books from which the children could make a choice.

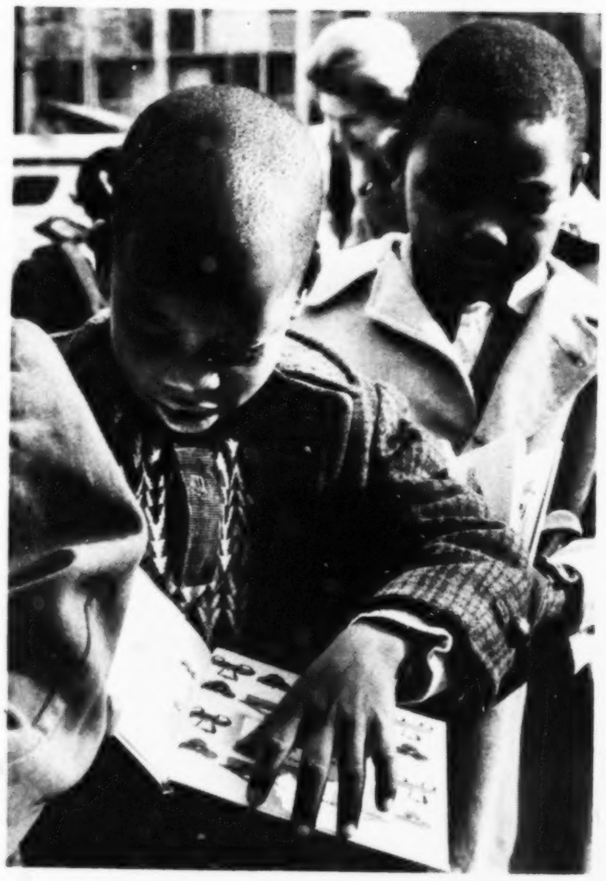
Shortage of books was partly due to the considerable number taken by teachers, a development which has not been anticipated. Distribution captains responded to teacher enthusiasm frequently by inviting them to take books, and placing no restriction on quantity. RIF was happy to have these books swell the meager or non-existent classroom libraries. But RIF's focal point is to give books to children —to encourage children to build home libraries.

3. Third Distribution

Scheduling of distribution for the third go-round was pushed to May 1, 1967; because of the Easter vacation. RIF had only a month in which to get the last two books into children's hands before the summer vacation. Few thought it could be done. They underestimated the RIF staff and volunteers.

Three excellent people were available at the end of March for employment on a part-time basis. Two shared direction of the program, one operating primarily in the office, the other mainly in the field. The third was a public relations man to whom credit goes for originating the idea of producing a RIF film documentary.

This trio managed between May 1 and June 7 to schedule 61 distributions in 19 days. They delivered thousands of questionnaires to parents and teachers. They coordinated effectively the activities of more than 150 volunteers. And they publicized the program widely.



An important ingredient in the third distribution was the collection of data for evaluation. This was also the last chance to get our message to parents. Several principals had sent letters to parents. A number of parents responded by expressing their interest in the program. RIF sent a suggested sample letter for parents to other principals. The committee also was granted permission to give each child a questionnaire to take home with his books. He was to return it to his teacher. The questionnaire was kept short and simple. The main objective was to guage family awareness and interest and, once again, to promote family participation.

Letters to teachers from Mrs. McNamara, with questionnaires attached, were sent to principals for distribution.

School personnel was highly cooperative. Many worked to make the distributions more exciting and stimulating. One principal held PTA meetings the day of the distribution so parents would take part.

A school administrator reported that RIF was the one volunteer project in recent years about which he had heard only praise from principals.

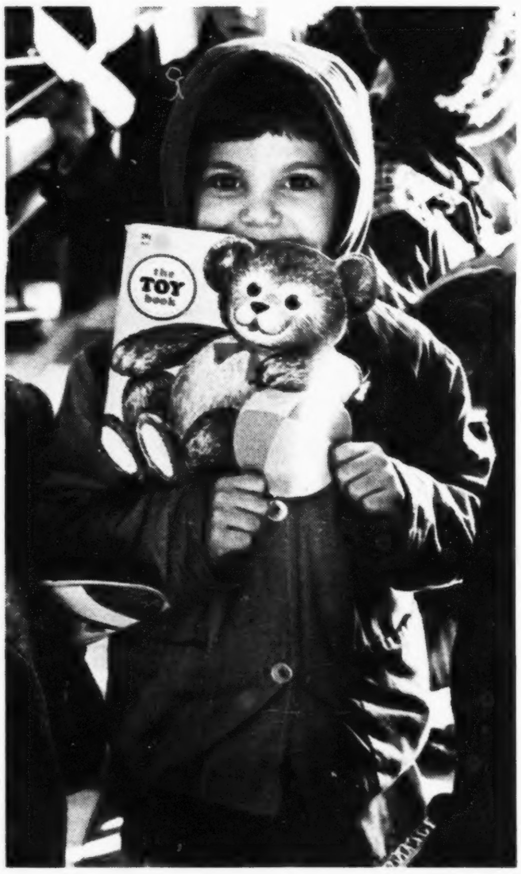
Captains were asked at a meeting during the countdown for the third distribution to suggest the types of books they would like to have sent to their schools. They had learned a great deal about the interests and tastes of their children. The variety of suggestions was interesting.

One captain requested biographies, mysteries, activity and coloring books, poems and jingles. Another called for sewing, science and magic books, jokes and riddles and biographies—especially of John F. Kennedy. Still another found a demand for How & Why science, Batman, poetry, Easy Readers, sewing and coloring books, crossword puzzles, jokes and riddles.

Books were selected with more eagerness and yet more care at the last distribution. Children identified titles of books they had bought or had been given since the first offering. Several inquired as to where they could buy some of the books, particularly those in a series like Nancy Drew, Cherry Ames and the Hardy Boys.

Many spoke with pride of building home libraries, of making bookcases and of the good care they were taking of their books. Teachers had been notified that they, too, could select two books. They seemed as eager and enthusiastic as the children.

Questionnaires were sent to all volunteers who participated in the distributions. Some had worked at one or two, others at all three. Several had served at more than one school. The participation of a large number of devoted volunteers contributed more to the success of the program than any other single factor.



B. What RIF Accomplished

The last book was selected by the last child at Nichols Avenue School in Washington on June 7, 1967—just a year and two months after the first seed was planted for "Reading Is Fun-damental."

Some 205,000 books had been given to 41,000 children in seven months. Another 20,000 volumes had been distributed to teachers, librarians and counselors, as well as children enrolled in the 1966 Summer 13.7 Motivational Reading Program of the D.C. Public Schools Reading Clinic, and to children in the District of Columbia's Junior Village, Department of Welfare.

These are the statistical accomplishments RIF places an equally high value on the human gains. Not only the children profited by being given access to books. Adults—some 250 of them—donated 6,000 hours of their time and effort. Their reward, in most cases, was ample: the smile of a child discovering a new world, the wonderful world of books.

We know that RIF did not make book lovers of 41,000 children. But we do know from thousands of comments and letters received from children, parents, teachers, and principals that the joy the children found in reading the books gave them a great deal to talk about. Many of them clearly communicated this pleasure. The experience suggests that many children read poorly because they have so little acquaintance with books. RIF found a hunger for books not only among children but also among their parents—and even among teachers who longed for "fun to read" books to keep in their classrooms.

Kinds of Material Gathered for Evaluation of RIF

Response to the project was reported to the RIF Committee in a number of ways.

Comments of children at book distributions were reported by team captains and teachers. Comments of teachers and principals at book distributions were reported by members of the distribution teams. Children volunteered comments about their reactions to the books in thousands of letters sent to the RIF Committee. Parents' reactions were solicited in a one-page questionnaire sent to the children's homes. Teachers were asked to record their impressions of the children's responses and evaluation of the project by filling out a one-page questionnaire. Team captains also filled out questionnaires. Many parents, teachers and principals volunteered their comments in letters sent to the Committee. The information made available from this material makes it possible to provide a verbal picture of the effects of the program told in the words of those who participated.

Comments At Book Distributions

A few of the comments made by children, teachers and principals at the time of the book distributions may be of interest.

1. Children's Comments

Some children had a definite idea of the kind of book they wanted, and some were confused by the display of so many different kinds of books. But most came to the distributions with the spirit of adventure to explore the field, before deciding:

> *"Gee! Where did you get all these swell books?"*
>
> *"When do we have to bring them back?"*
>
> *"Can I take my book home?" (Many of the children were incredulous, even though they had been told beforehand the books were theirs to keep.)*
>
> *"This is something I really want to read!" (A book about animals.)*
>
> *"I want a book I can read."*
>
> *"I'm going to the moon so I want one about space."*
>
> *"My brother got one about Curious George. I want one about him, too."*
>
> *"Can I take a book for my baby brother?"*

"My mother told me to get a book about sewing or cooking."

"Can I get another book? My teacher made me take this."

"Would you help me find a book about Dinosaurs?"

"I like Saturdays. That's why I took this book." (Saturday's Children)

"I want a book on the earth because we're studying it in school . . ."

"Can't I have 3 books? I can't decide which one to put back."

"I want only Batman and you don't have any more."

"I'm tired of Batman. I want a book about real people like PT 109."

"I want this dictionary because it will help me learn new words."

"I made a book case at home for my books."

"When are you coming back?" (The most often repeated question).

2. Teachers' Comments

"Thank you for a practical project."

"My pupils need to know that there are people who love them enough to show them evidence of concern for them."

"It is interesting to observe how pupils become more selective when they are given freedom of choice."

"I have found these books to be of great value to my class."

"Every child now has something to share at Language and Sharing Time."

"Pupils who are poor readers tend to cling to their books but not read them. They just hold them and leaf through them and show them to others."

"Many of the children have confided they never had a book of their own and now they have lots of books."

"Not one child has complained of a younger sister or brother tearing a book."

"The children show pride in their books, bring them to school, discuss them, and use some of them as reference books."

"The books are a source of reading for enjoyment for many, for others a challenge."

"It would be helpful if children knew where they could buy similar books—maybe a list of stores."

"Find a way to involve more parents. Increase their interest in the program."

> *"I think RIF is wonderful. Along with many other reasons, it helps one of the most basic needs of my boys: the need to have something they can say they chose."*

> *"I feel that oral language skills as well as reading have been benefited by this program."*

Many teachers made requests for copies of a particular book for each child in their classes. For example one teacher made a special request for 20 copies of *Mary Jane* by Dorothy Sterling, for a 5th grade class of girls only. Another requested 36 copies of *The Story of the American Negro* for her 6th grade class. Other teachers wanted every child in their classes to have specific science or history books which would supplement subjects they were teaching. We tried to serve these requests when possible.

3. *Principals' Comments*

> *"It delights me to watch their beaming faces as they walk around the tables looking for their books."*

> *"I hope this program will continue to be brought to the children of the District of Columbia for many more years."*

> *"The children are learning more about how to choose a book. They are browsing through the pages more instead of just judging it by the cover."*

> *"The children appreciate reading what they want to read without adult direction."*

> *"The children are developing confidence as a result of owning and reading their own books."*

> *"I didn't know you could get all those titles in paperbacks."*

> *"We've been buying the Spotlight Wonder Books on the Capitol and the White House for around two dollars. These paperbacks are beautiful and only sixty-nine cents."*

Children's Letters

Thousands of letters were received from children volunteering their own reactions to the RIF project. These letters reflected enjoyment of the books and a wide variety of interests; pride of ownership and pleasure in sharing their books with others; discovery that learning from books could be fun.

The following quotes reflect varieties of interest and enjoyment of books:

> *"My book is the Secret Place. My favorite poem is Inch-Worm. I like it because it is the funniest poem I've ever heard. . . ." wrote Brenda.*
>
> *"My book is about a boy who wish he had a horse. I like this book because it tells how Indians can find a horse," wrote Clementine.*
>
> *From Wanda: "I am glad you were able to take time out to send Park View School some real interesting books for little boys and girls and for big children also. I looked over all the books and chose George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. . . ."*
>
> *"I selected two books about some famous Negroes in our world," wrote JoAnn. "I like to read about the Union Army, Atlanta Georgia, my hometown, the Underground Railroad, and the six Negroes of the Revolutionary Era. I like to read about people who fought for our freedom. That is why I selected two books about Negroes."*
>
> *Ernestine wrote: "When I started reading my book I felt that I was in the story. . . ."*
>
> *"I picked out two of the most interesting books. One is called Helen Keller the other is Beastly Rhyme . . . Helen Keller is*

about a blind lady who grew up blind," writes Damita. "I hope children all over the world can profit from your project."

"It was difficult to decide which book to select," wrote Lewis.

"I selected a book called The Middle Sister because I am the middle sister," wrote Marie. "It is about a girl who wished she was the oldest sister, and I do too!"

"The names of my books are My Lord, What a Morning and Silver for General Washington. Marian Anderson tells her story in My Lord, What a Morning, and General Washington is a story about Valley Forge. I enjoyed it very much," wrote Valerie.

"Thank you for letting me choose the books that I will enjoy reading. I hope that you can come back to Maury so that I can have a chance to choose some more books," wrote Gloria. "I enjoyed the books that I picked out. The names of my books are Abraham Lincoln, Worth Fighting For and The Arrow Book of Jokes and Riddles."

The following excerpts from the children's letters show their pride in ownership and in sharing their books:

"It (his book) is just the kind of book I like to read. I read this book three times. My brothers enjoyed reading the book too. I hope to keep the book as long as I live," wrote Byron.

Alleta, Grade 2, writes: "The books were wonderful. I read the books over and over. I read them to my brother."

"I would love to have some more books. They were nice and shining and clean and weren't torn . . . " wrote Sherry.

Joyce wrote: "My mother enjoyed reading about Florence Nightingale."

"My mother likes to read some of my books," wrote Gregory B., another 5th Grader. "Our boys and girls learned that reading is a lot of fun. The books that I selected are P.T. 109 and Tom Sawyer. I like P.T. 109 because it tells how President Kennedy started his life, and how heroic he was while in the Navy."

"My father read the last book I got and I think he'll like the two books I just got.

"Thank you for your books because I never had any before. Your friend, Irene."

The following quotes from children's letters express pleasure in books as a learning experience:

"Once I didn't like to read books, but when I got the books that you gave me I changed my feelings," wrote Chenoki, Grade 4.

Calvin wrote, "I also enjoyed the book about Insects because our class is studying about living things in Science."

"I can find information in these books," wrote Elaine. "They will help me read better. . . . "

Rosetta, a second grader, wrote, "The best one is the Dictionary.

THE PLAYFUL LITTLE DOG
THE ADVENTURES OF SILLY BILLY
FLY-AWAY AT THE AIR SHOW
WHEN I GROW UP
WILL YOU COME TO MY PARTY?
LAURIE AND THE YELLOW CURTAINS
BENJAMIN IN THE WOODS
BARNEY BEAGLE AND THE CAT
THE SECRET CAT
BETTY BROWN MAKES SOMETHING GOOD
READ-ALOUD STORIES FROM CHILD LIFE
KITTEN AND CAT STORIES TO READ ALOUD
FAVORITE POEMS TO READ ALOUD
READ-ALOUD PETER RABBIT STORIES
THE WITCH FAMILY
Eleanor Estes
BULLDOZER
Stephen W. Meader
Cowboy Jo of the Circle S
BORROWERS
TALES FROM THE RED FAIRY BOOK
SNOWBOUND IN HIDDEN VALLEY
THE LONG BLACK SCHOONER
THE WIZARD OF OZ
ARROW BOOK OF GHOST STORIES
REVOLT ON ALPHA C
AFRAID TO RIDE
TROUBLE AFTER SCHOOL
THE ENORMOUS EGG
ALL-OF-A-KIND FAMILY
ELIZABETH ENRIGHT
COTTON IN MY SACK
LOIS LENSKI
JUDY'S JOURNEY

> *I like all of the books. They help me learn the words that I don't know."*

> *"My own book How Animals Sleep has taught me facts I couldn't even find in the World Book Encyclopedia. To close I would like to say children at Park View School are 25 pages smarter."*

Parents' Questionnaires

A questionnaire consisting of five questions that could be answered yes or no, with additional space for comments, was sent home to parents. Of the approximately 39,000 questionnaires given to children to take home, 8,198 were returned—about 21%.

One school with an enrollment of 884 children returned 458 questionnaires with a note from the principal that this represented the total number of families in her school. One family, she reported, had eight children; with an influx of 40 books in the home, the father had built a bookshelf and the family was now enjoying a well-stocked home library!

Since there is frequently more than one child from each family in a school, the percentage of returns related to the number of families represented in the schools would be considerably higher.

Response to specific questions was as follows:

1. Did your child tell you about the Reading Is Fun Book distribution at his school?

Yes	**7,923**
No	**143**
No answer	**132**

Parents' comments:

> *"Yes he did. He looked forward to it. He couldn't wait to get to school."*

> *"That was the first thing he told me about when he got home from school that day"*

> *"Yes, about a million times, it seems."*

2. Did your child show you the five books he or she selected at the distributions this year?

Yes	**8,008**
No	**127**
No answer	**63**

Parents' comments:

> *"Yes. He also discussed them with me after he read them."*

> *"The children and I prepared a special place in our home for*

their new books and after each distribution we would read them together."

"Not only showed them to us but shared them with other members of the family."

"My son showed me the books that he selected each time and was very anxious to read the books to the others."

3. Did you think these were good books for your child?

Yes	**8,106**
No	**31**
No answer	**61**

Parents' comments:

"Very good. Where else can a child find such books?"

"Yes. She found them easy to see the print which was clear and large and interesting."

"Yes, I do. In fact, it seems to have made her pick up books here at home and read."

"Yes, because she became aware of the fact that there were other types of books she could read besides text books."

"Yes, and most of all he was interested in reading them."

"The books selected by my daughter were very informative and in my opinion expressed her various interests. She selected two books of historical interest, one based on a science series, a fun and activity book, and one centered around her intended career."

"I thought the books were excellent. He chose one about youngsters playing baseball. I thought this one was particularly good because he was able to read it without becoming frustrated; the story was humorously told, and it gave an important moral."

4. Does your child like having new books of his own?

Yes	**8,148**
No	**28**
No answer	**22**

Parents' comments:

"They liked the brand new books."

"Very much so, because he told me that he picked the books he understood and liked."

"Yes. It increased her interest in visiting the public library to get more books to read."

"Yes she did. What's important is they belong to them."

"Yes. It makes her feel that she can bring books home just like her sister, and have something to study and do when her sister is doing her homework."

"My children enjoy having new books and now they have many in their collection which they would not have had if the committee didn't exist."

5. Did anyone else read the books?

Yes	**7,389**
No	**689**
No answer	**112**

Parents' comments:

"Yes, I read them, my husband read one and my teen-age daughter used one for her school work!"

"My family and friends read and read again these books. My child tried so hard to read them to us. He succeeded, too. I like that."

"Our children and the block children started a little reading club. They gathered at certain times and read and looked at the very beautiful pictures."

"I am usually so tired in the evening but my child was so enthusiastic about the books I just couldn't help feeling the same way. He takes a book to bed with him."

"The children enjoyed the books. It's very seldom John reads but I was really amazed to see him with a book in his hand."

"Everyone that came in the house. That's how proud she was of having her own books and being able to read them."

"The one about President Kennedy was really wonderful. I even carried it to work and each of my co-workers read it."

"Yes, I enjoyed them as much as the children."

"Yes, I thought they were good books to read. They were the type of books to make a slow reader want to read."

"Yes. I think the books are the nicest thing that could happen to the school children in this neighborhood."

"The whole family get together after dinner and read all the books."

"All my children read each other's book and enjoyed them and when they have visitors, they are so proud of their collection that they show them off and read them over and over."

"Yes I read the books to my pre-schooler."

Teachers' Questionnaires

Questionnaires were also sent to the approximately 1,500 teachers involved in the program. About 30% (445) of these were returned.

In reply to the question "Do you feel this program has benefited your students in the following way?" teachers commented as follows:

A. Pleasure and Pride in Ownership?

Positive	**417**
Negative	**4**
No answer	**28**

Teachers' comments:

> *"My pupils became possessive when they received individual labels with the books. Writing their names in the books was serious and personal."*
>
> *"Beaming proud faces were visible."*
>
> *" . . . They were especially proud of being able to tell others what the titles were."*
>
> *"For some children this is the first book owned."*
>
> *"What you get free in life you don't appreciate."*
>
> *"I have noticed that my students take greater pride in all of their books since you gave them an opportunity to become proud owners."*

B. Enjoyment of a Book?

Positive	**388**
Negative	**2**
No answer	**54**

Teachers' comments:

> *"Pupils showed genuine joy in reading a book selected by themselves."*
>
> *"They use these books for reports and leisure time reading."*
>
> *"The children really enjoyed the books. They read them and work in them until they are made to place them in their desks."*

"Many of the children read to each other during their lunch period. They also discussed them in the sharing periods."

"To the extent parents read at home to smaller children to reinforce the teacher's efforts."

C. Increased Interest in Books?

Positive	**364**
Negative	**7**
No answer	**54**

Teachers' comments:

"Children were motivated to read other books."

"Visitation to the room library was more frequent. More books were taken home."

"The program has helped them realize that books can take us places that we can go no other way."

"Evidences of increased interest have been seen in their extensive use of the school's library facilities."

"Some children shared their books, so instead of reading two or three, they read four or five books."

"The children handle books more carefully now; less torn pages, less writing in them."

"My pupils have expressed a desire to have a library of paperbacks in their classrooms where they can borrow many different kinds of books to read."

D. Improved Attitude Toward Reading?

Positive	**325**
Negative	**10**
No answer	**110**

Teachers' comments:

"Yes. Many who are slow readers have found interest level and want to know words although book is difficult."

"Pupils made book reviews voluntarily from the books they owned!"

"The children are learning the value of reading for increased knowledge."

"It's a challenge. They read independently, using word recognition skills and also comprehension skills."

"They're interested in learning words to better help them read books of individual interest."

"A willingness to do more oral reading has been noticed."

"I feel this experience has been too shallow to have an over-

all affect on attitudes and habits of those pupils needing a change in their attitudes and habits."

"The 'my book attitude' seems to be very present in the poor readers—but not actually more reading taking place."

"This program has given a boost to my reading program because of the children's increased interest in reading for pleasure."

E. What Has Been the Children's Response?

Positive	**416**
Negative	**2**
No answer	**27**

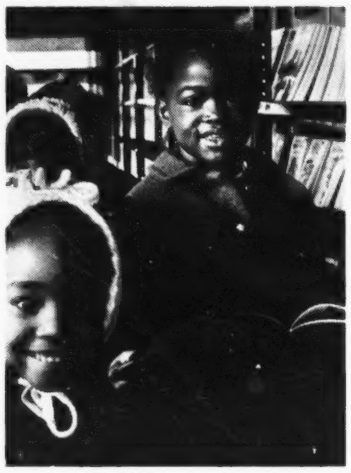
Teachers' comments:

"Gee! What lovely books to have to take home and enjoy for keeps."

"Enthusiastic. Their heads stay buried in them and they enjoy exchanging them."

"My children were delighted to go down and make their own selection."

"Children have been delighted. They beg to share books orally with classmates. Girls who chose cook books have made cookies for entire class."



"Favorable. They all looked forward to their turn to select books. Many have started personal libraries at home."

"They even exchanged books so that each one could enjoy the others books. There was no fear of a book being lost as the name plates made each child realize ownership of the books. I did not see one of the books marred or torn."

"Sheer joy and enthusiasm."

F. What Has Been the Parents' Response?

Positive	**232**
Negative	**2**
Didn't Know	**74**
No answer	**137**

Teachers' comments:

"Several parents wrote notes of gratitude to the Librarian."

"They are reading them too. Many parents expressed their appreciation of the program and the interest in books developed by their children. Those parents on the Committee who helped issue them were amazed at the variety of books."

"My children's parents are over-joyed. They say they wish they were young again and able to enjoy the advantages that today's youth are receiving."

"Parents have sent notes to be reassured that the child could

> *keep the book; because they are so nice and 'I've read them to all my children'."*

> *"Parents feel the books are a wonderful way to encourage their children to learn to read."*

> *"Some parents were surprised by the contents and were not aware that such books are available at such a reasonable price."*

> *". . . since children tend to mirror the real home and family attitudes and habits, and also values, it would perhaps be worthwhile to give the parents a new outlook on books and the uses and objectives of books. Thusly, breaking down undesirable attitudes, acquiring desirable attitudes toward books."*

To the question—"Would you like to have some of these books in your classroom?"—over half of the 445 teachers who returned the questionnaires said 'yes.' The types of books most of them indicated they would like were: science, stories, history and biography. About 30 indicated interest in having books of poetry, activity, dictionaries, the world around us.

Two teachers made the following joint statement:

> *"We are impressed to pause from the busy activity of the school today to express our sincere appreciation for this program. There are many programs and much activity in our schools which benefit children indirectly over long periods of time. This program is excellent with immediate benefits to teachers, parents, children and families."*

Team Captains' Questionnaires

Many team captains covered two or even three schools during the last distribution, and most served the same schools for all three distributions. Thirty-six questionnaires were received from the team captains in which all expressed approval of the program, but not all agreed on the degree of its effectiveness.

Thirty-two felt RIF was successful in achieving its objectives; four thought it a qualified success.

Later distributions profited from experiences with earlier ones. The 500 to 600 titles we were able to provide for the later distributions gave the children a more varied and interesting selection of books from which to choose. Most captains indicated that the key to the success of a distribution was the preparation for it.

One school at which the first distribution had been unsatisfactory in terms of our objectives, was turned over to a new captain, a man who had recently retired from the Library of Congress. He was enthusiastic about the program and was determined to make the next two distributions successful.

He met with the principal and pointed out that the success of the program depended in large part upon cooperation of parents and teachers, as well as allowing the children more time and freedom of choice in selecting books. The quality of the second distribution improved, but the new team captain was disappointed.

"I was unable to get members of the PTA to assist in the distribution, and I was not completely satisfied with the amount of time the child had to browse or with the general atmosphere in the room. I wanted to see it more relaxed," he said.

The day before the third distribution he spent the morning conferring with the principal and visiting classrooms to meet teachers and children to talk about the RIF program and the books.

"The children were all very happy to learn that once again they would have an opportunity to select books which they would own and take home," he reported.

This time he succeeded in getting the message across. The principal, teachers and some parents joined enthusiastically to make this distribution a most successful one.

"We are very pleased with the excitement and pleasure the boys and girls expressed as well as the delightful response from the teachers. . . . There is no doubt here that the program is an asset to our school effort," wrote the principal shortly afterwards.

Following are excerpts of the reports of other volunteers:

> *"I feel the RIF program was a great success. A greater selection of paperback books was introduced to parents, teachers, and children. More library cards were obtained and more visits made to the public library. Children tried to find books in certain stores. Pupils enjoyed choosing their own books and hugged them with pride and joy. If you could have heard their squeals of delight—and even tears of joy flowed freely. You just can't write it down. Nothing on paper can express the feelings of these kids. You just have to be there."*

> *"The book plate added to their joy of ownership. It was a pleasure to see the face light up when they understood the books were their 'very own'."*

> *"I am particularly interested in the high level of interest of the books. They had this. The average elementary school library*

collection does not—at least not in any kind of proportion to the number of books in all. RIF was much more realistic about the interests of children, as well as their reading ability. RIF certainly stimulated the school library program—in all the right ways."

"Unfortunately the books were not always of high interest level and when so, not enough of them. It still was a good experience for most children—who had, for the first time in their life a book of their own."

"I felt RIF was highly successful at my school."

"A problem child showed one interest during the whole semester and that was reading the books from the Distribution."

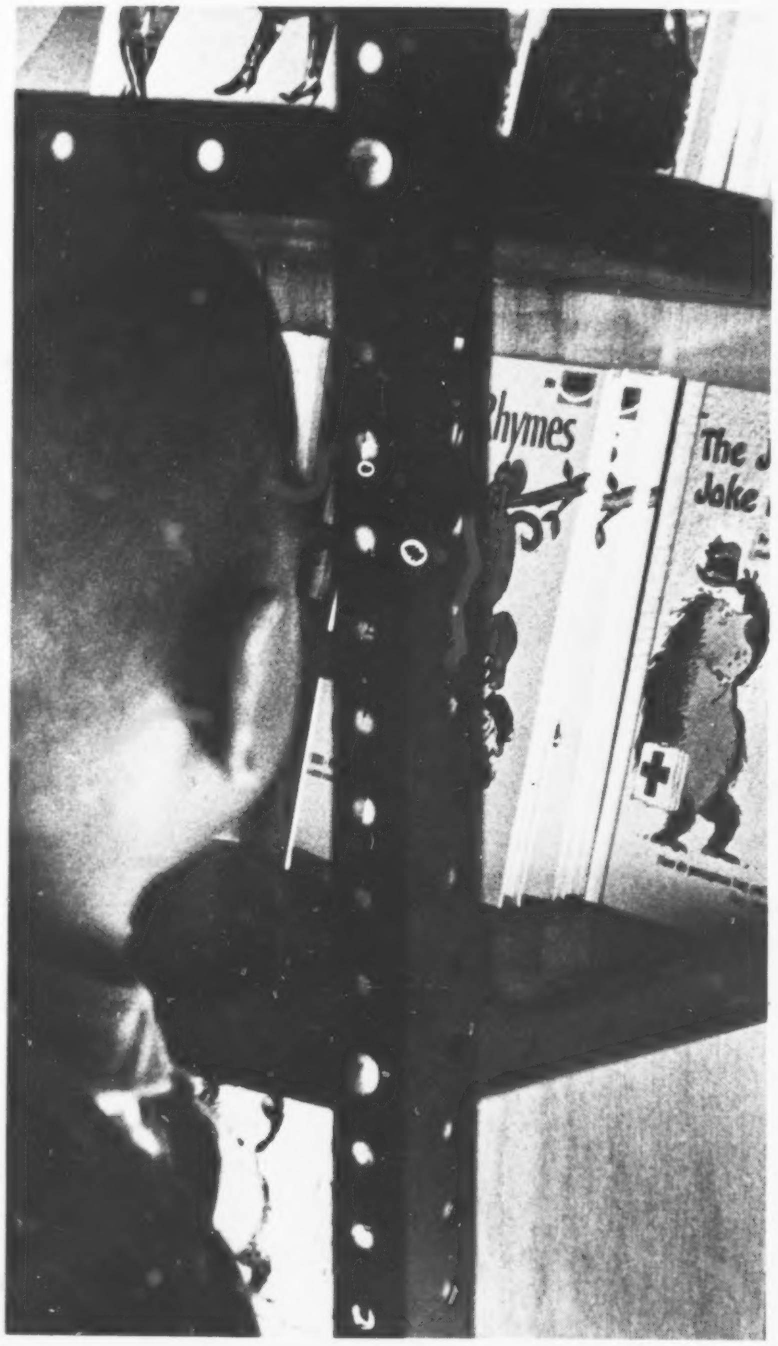
"It is, I think, a well known fact that too many give-aways tend to make the recipient sit back and relax, rather than get stimulated into action to go after what he wants. True, many children never had a book before this and therefore could not know the joy of reading and owning one. But now they have, and I think it would be a grave mistake to continue giving, where through some effort on their part they could own a book and have pride in the ownership because of it. . . . Let's not give them any more books, but rather try to guide and stimulate them to want more books through their own efforts."

Comments From Parents' Letters

"I want to take time out just to thank you and the Committee for the books that were given to my children. I have one that I am so happy that she was able to get the books.

"She was in the sixth grade and in a basic class and couldn't read one thing. The first book she picked was one on a first grade level. And she read it. I did not say anything to her but when I looked she had her brother's book. He was in the fourth grade and was in a higher book which he chose. The two play school and I was very surprised at the words she knew.

"The books that you gave her made her want to read, and when school was getting ready to close she was out of basic reading and had come to be the best reader in her class."



> "The books Charles brought home were very interesting for a little boy, and he is getting a lot of pleasure out of them."

> "I do appreciate your kindness to my child for the books that was given her and I will try to see that she learn them and also take care of them."

> "I wish to thank you wholeheartedly for the Reading Is Fun books given my children. I admire their taste in choosing some of the books. They have enjoyed them very much. I found each book very good reading. My little son spends a great deal of time coloring different pictures in his coloring book. No one is allowed to touch his books. I'm teaching them how to take care of the books for they are very good books to read many, many times."

> "I am enclosing a small contribution to help your work, which I hope will continue. The children in many of our schools desperately need the books."

Comments From Teachers' Letters

> "Reading is much more fun, our boys and girls find out, when they can choose just the right book, and can take it home and keep it for their very own."

> "It is certainly a delight to watch their enthusiasm grow since the children received your generous gift. . . ."

> "I have seen much evidence of the good that your program has done. Many of the children have a new interest in books. It is surprising how the children asked for special books by the last distribution."

> "I hardly know of anything our children need and appreciate more than books they can call their very own. I was especially thrilled at the wise choice of books my fifth graders made. We are in the process of displaying a bulletin board with compositions and illustrations from the books read."

Letter From A Principal

The following letter expresses the experiences of one principal who participated in the RIF program, and the Committee believes these views are widely held among the principals:

> "To repeat again a 'Thank You' for the presentation of five free books to each child who attends our school is unnecessary, I know, but this repetition of gratitude would be more easily understood if you could have——
>
> ——seen the faces of the children as they selected books that they could keep. They seemed to light up with joy.
>
> ——been summoned to the telephone on numerous occasions only to hear the doubting voice of a parent who feels that her child has brought home one of the school's books with the misunderstanding that it is his to keep.
>
> ——experienced the having to bear with those youngsters who had to examine each book carefully to be sure that this lifetime friend could always be cherished by the selector.

——visited the classrooms periodically long after the issue date of these books to learn that this endeavor still stood high on the list of nice things that happened to us this year.

——known how eagerly children go through the library baskets in their rooms looking for books by the author of one of their own books.

——discovered for yourself the degree to which interest in reading has heightened.

——collected the data on how many of our children have purchased books on their own from drug and department stores since your committee had each start a library of his own.

——worked with parents and teachers who were willing to spend any number of hours in having the children make book selections that pleased their fancy.

——observed the childlike, happy faces of the teachers when they were told to select two books for their classroom libraries.

"Of course, some children still have not really been convinced that reading is fun. Who knows, one day we may reach them!

"In closing, I am saying 'thank you' again for the interest you have shown in the education of our children. We are happy that we are included in your program."

ELLEN TEBBITS

Summary of Evaluation Of Phase I, RIF School Program

Of course we did not instill in all 41,000 children a love of books and a desire to improve their reading skills. Neither did all principals, teachers and parents respond with unqualified enthusiasm.

From the information made available, however, we believe we can truthfully say:

1. Many thousands of children took great pride in being able to own a book they selected for themselves.

2. The program stimulated an interest in books and reading in many children who had been indifferent in books.

3. Many children have started home libraries.

4. Many parents have become aware of the availability of attractive inexpensive books and are encouraging their children's interest in them by purchasing them when they can.

5. Many parents and families are sharing with their children their enjoyment of the books.

6. Many teachers are eager to have similar paperback books for supplementary teaching materials and in classroom libraries to further stimulate independent reading.

7. A number of principals have become interested in purchasing paperback books for their schools.

The D.C. Board of Education in its 1969 budget for the first time requested authorization to purchase paperback textbooks to be given to students. The Board states "there is evidence that thousands of students have virtually no contact with books in their normal home experience." It adds a finding that out of 25,000 students identified as 'most likely to fail,' 30% own no books, and approximately 40% own only one or two books.

The school board's budget request goes on to say: "Many of these students are reading poorly not because of a lack of acceptable instruction or remedial reading service, but because they do not have an acquaintance with books *per se*. They do not have an opportunity to own books of their own. Their homes just do not provide books for them to read. . . ."

This is the need the RIF Committee is seeking to meet.

American Negro

VII. Phase II—

R I F Community Program

The first phase of the Reading Is Fun-damental Committee's program of activity had been carried out through the schools of the District of Columbia, and its successes had been attributable in no small degree to the cooperation extended by people both in and out of the school system who are interested in better education.

The RIF Committee's second phase was a period of concentration on development of techniques for distributing interesting books both to children and to low-income adults through the medium of various community organizations. Phase II, indeed, was developed in response to a directive from the Ford Foundation, which called on the Committee to "try out various ways and means that books of all kinds can be . . . distributed effectively using a variety of . . . community agencies." RIF was thus challenged to "devise and assess ways and means for children and adults to acquire books systematically."

How RIF proceeded to carry out that mission is described in the following pages of the report.

1967 Summer Pilot Project

A pilot project was planned for the summer of 1967 to serve as a guide in the development of more extensive community programs.

A specially designed delivery truck, purchased with funds contributed by the Ford Motor Company Fund, proved a great asset. It helped make book distributions both more effective and more fun for the youngsters.

The gaily decorated "Reading Is Funmobile" was scheduled to visit ten different locations a half-day each week for a period of from six to eight weeks. It was equipped with shelves and well stocked with books. The Funmobile brought not only books but also a variety of activities, such as storytelling, poetry-reading, games and songs.

Contacts were made with key people in a number of community agencies in low income sections of the city. RIF's objective was to supplement community summer programs that were operating with limited funds.

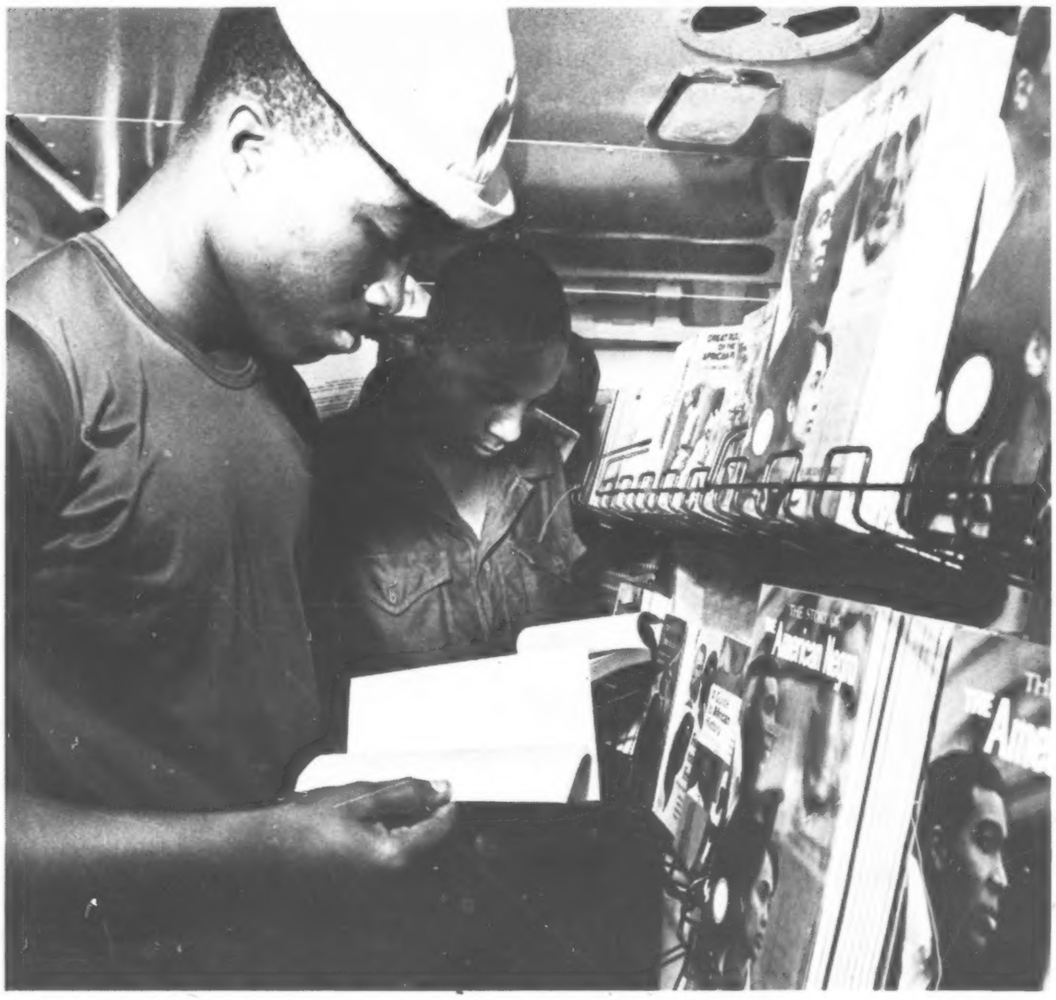
Thus, at a church-school-community summer project in Northwest Washington which operated a day camp program for children aged four through 19, over 200 children received books during the eight-week period. Three hundred Headstart children trailed through the Funmobile weekly for six weeks at another location. An additional 200 children were served in this area at a church-sponsored youth activity program.

KENNEDY'S
LIBRARY

At a community settlement house in Northeast Washington, 75 day camp children received books weekly, and a teen-age evening program, which included a reading discussion group, was supplied with selected titles including books on Negro history. Hundreds of children in this area were given books each week at a Recreation Center and at a school-community summer program.

Two housing developments in Southeast Washington that conducted day camp programs for children also received weekly visits from the Funmobile. In one of the housing projects, eight hundred books were contributed to a lending library for use by residents on a year-round basis. Books were also distributed weekly from the Funmobile at a Recreation Center in the area.

Distributions in Southwest Washington were tried at a school playground where there was no recreational super-



vision. Without a community coordinator to spread the word in the neighborhood and to help get the RIF message to the local public, the program did not work. These were the only unsuccessful distributions of the entire community program. After two attempts, RIF transferred the operation to a branch public library in the area. A volunteer who lives in the community and the librarian cooperated in publicizing the program locally and in developing story-telling and reading activities in the library's community room to accompany the weekly distributions from the Funmobile.

In mid-August the Funmobile traveled to Laurel, Maryland—about 20 miles from Washington—where over a thousand book-hungry children living in the Children's Residential Centers of the D. C. Welfare Department eagerly greeted the arrival of the books.

The last Funmobile distributions of the summer project were made August 28-29 to nine hundred teen-age workers of "Pride, Inc.," a unique summer job project which had scheduled a three-day workshop on American Negro and African Culture. For the "Pride" people, the Funmobile was heavily stocked with volumes about American Negro and African history and biography and some titles by contemporary Negro authors, including Lorraine Hansberry, Dick Gregory, and James Baldwin.

Cooperation With Community Projects

The summer project was not limited to distributions from the Funmobile. Book deliveries were made to a community project involving schools, churches and residents in a three-block area. Here over 400 children and many of their parents taking part in a variety of activities were recipients of the books.

A two-day workshop for the parents of Head Start children was held as part of an effort to strengthen the Head Start program. RIF participated by delivering and supervising the distribution of books. RIF volunteers and staff discussed the books with the parents and stressed the importance of their reading to *their* children as a means of getting them interested in books and in school generally.

Approximately eight thousand books were delivered to a special program offered by the D. C. Public School Reading Clinic to children age 13.7 years and over, who, under school system regulations, must enter junior high school regardless of their unsatisfactory academic achievement. In classes of not more than ten children each, teachers experimented with ways and means of using the RIF books, which were selected each week by the children, as teaching tools. For instance, *Batman* provided an inspired introduction to Greek mythology. Individual hobbies and scientific interests were stimulated and developed. Information from the books helped guide group projects on such activities as making topographical maps and electrical systems.

About 20,000 books were distributed during the summer. Twenty to thirty RIF volunteers, including teenagers, and staff members participated in the book distributions as well as in story reading and singing with the children, and group discussions with parents. As word spread in the neighborhoods of the Funmobile distributions, many of the same parents kept returning each week for books with their small children in tow.

The summer program generated enthusiaism among everyone involved. Requests poured in for its continuance during the winter and the development of projects at dozens of additional community facilities.

Expansion of RIF Program

Plans for continuation and expansion of the community phase of the RIF program required additional funds to carry the project through to June 1, 1968. The Ford Foundation grant had been for a one-year period terminating in February, 1968, but the National Home Library Association, which had funded the RIF School Program, granted an additional $10,000 for the Community Program.

At this point, RIF was fortunate in being able to retain the services of the young man who had driven the Funmobile during the summer and who had done an excellent job of supervising distributions. His remaining on the job was especially important because of his success in establishing community contacts to ensure effective distributions. It soon became obvious that the success of the community project depended on RIF's ability to communicate its basic goals and philosophy to the participating agencies and to enlist their cooperation.

RIF Community projects ranged from programs for preschoolers to distributions to senior citizens. The program included loans as well as gifts of books, tutoring programs, pre-school activities, adult education classes, teenage reading-discussion groups, and many others.

The RIF staff worked long hours and spent considerable effort in laying the groundwork for the various community projects. This preparation contributed immeasurably to the solid success of each project.

Several summer programs were continued into the fall and winter. Additional distributions were made during the year at the D. C. Children's Residential Center in Laurel.

Three church and two housing development programs continued with once-a-month Funmobile distributions on Saturdays. The eagerness and excitement of the children more than compensated for the fatigue of the day-long distributions.

Three to four hundred children line up with numbered tickets, enthusiastically waiting their turn. The Funmobile's "ooga" horn, partially hidden, adds another note of fun and surprise to the occasion. Every so often a child accidentally touches it and squeals with delight at the sudden blast of noise.

The finale of the trip through bookland is the RIF "tattoo", a rubber stamp with the letters "RIF", which are "printed" on the child's hand. The children enjoy this final touch, which also serves the practical purpose of letting us know which children had already been aboard the Funmobile.

Flexible Distribution Systems

1. RIF staff and volunteers tried to arrange for story reading or related activities to take place at the time of the distributions. This program was most effectively carried out at the *Community Cooperative Laundromat,* which also serves as a center of community activities. In addition to distributing books from the Funmobile one Saturday a month to the children in the area, RIF has kept the book racks stocked continuously in the community room of the laundromat. Visitors to that facility can either borrow the books while waiting for the washing machines and dryers to complete their cycles; or they can take them home as permanent possessions; or they can use the book racks as a no-cost lending library. The three alternatives have all been widely used. Thousands of the fun-to-read books go into home libraries in the neighborhood; on the other hand, hundreds of volumes are returned to the "library" when the individual is through with them.

The books are clearly as popular with the adults who use the laundromat as with the children who tag along with their parents or grandparents while the wash is being done. The director of the cooperative laundromat noted, among other things, that the availability of the books stimulated conversation among many of the people with whom it had heretofore been impossible to communicate. One mother

γ

BARREL of LAUGHS
Down the Mississippi

was so inspired by a RIF book about nurses that she decided to return to school in order to get nursing training herself.

2. Book racks in the *waiting rooms of the Juvenile Court* are also kept stocked by RIF. These books are used by children and parents who are forced to wait sometimes for hours until their cases are called. The director of volunteers at the court, as she became aware of the low reading levels of the older children, initiated a tutoring program. RIF has contributed books to the 113 students who have become involved in this program.

3. A number of other *community tutoring programs* are being regularly supplied with books. Several Vista workers requested and received books for their tutoring projects. Three hundred books were supplied to one Vista worker for use in teaching a group of 44 mothers how to help their children read better.

4. *A Block Neighborhood Center* that had been successful in collecting several thousand used books to start a library received 1,000 new books from RIF. Saturday book distributions are being made at this center. A community leader who was instrumental in establishing the center and who lives on the block, organized a reading-discussion club for adults, with books and a discussion leader supplied by RIF.

5. A shortage of reading materials for 80 persons enrolled in *adult education classes for senior citizens* was met by RIF with books specifically selected to meet the need. Many of these men and women had progressed to second and third grade reading level, while others were just learning to write the alphabet. (One student, age 84, was thrilled at being able to sign his name for the first time in his life!)

6. A *community shop,* set up in a community school to sell used clothes and household goods to residents of the neighborhood, opened a pre-holiday gift section. RIF contributed over a thousand books to the project to be sold at not more than five cents each. Parents generally bought the books to give to their children. On the Tuesday before Christmas the shop was especially opened after school for children only. Many of them bought books for brothers and sisters. One boy spent a long time looking through the books and finally with great care and deliberation selected seven of them. He was asked if he were buying them all for gifts. He said, "Oh, no, they're all for me."

7. *A neighborhood museum* set up by the Smithsonian Institution in a Southeast Washington community, is receiving books supplied by RIF, and an effort is being made to coordinate the books with the museum's programs and exhibits.

8. RIF books are supplied on a regular basis for reading rooms of several *Recreation Centers* in low income areas.

9. RIF stocked a library in the *club room of a senior citizens' apartment dwelling.* These senior citizens look forward each month as eagerly as the children to the book distribution from the Funmobile.

This brief discussion of projects indicates the range and variety of RIF Community Programs, but of course does not include all of them. Despite the large number of projects RIF has served, and is continuing to serve, we still do not have sufficient funds to meet all the requests that are addressed to the committee.

READING IS FUN-MOBILE
D C CITIZENS FOR BETTER PUBLIC ED
1346 CONN AVE NW

VIII. *Conclusion*

The demand and the need are great in Washington. The demand and the need are just as great in many urban and rural areas of the country. Children, young people and adults are hungry for books—books which they cannot afford, books to which they all too often have little or no access, books of which they may not even be aware.

RIF's hope is that its experience will act as an inspiration and a guide to others who may wish to lead the way in their communities toward providing a love of books for those who have rarely had the benefit of interesting books of their own.

The values of reading are so tremendous, in so many ways, that the question keeps thrusting forward: Can we afford *not* to do more to provide books to these fellow-citizens, young and old alike, who without the efforts of groups like the RIF Committee, would be deprived of the pleasures and the positive benefits of reading interesting books? □

Appendix A

READING IS FUN-DAMENTAL COMMITTEE

- Mrs. Robert S. McNamara, Chairman
  - *Member, Executive Committee, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education*
- Mrs. Barbara Atkinson
  - *Neighbors, Inc.*
- Mrs. Alan Barth
  - *Member, Executive Committee, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education, Action Committee for D. C. School Libraries*
- Mrs. Oscar Basiliko
  - *Chairman, Library Committee, PTA Shepherd School*
- Mrs. William Benesch
  - *Board, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education*
  - *Coordinator, Counselor Aides, Urban Service Corps*
- Mrs. Charles A. Brown
  - *Library Reader, Burroughs School*
- Mr. Paul Burnette
  - *Army Library, Department of the Army*
- Mrs. Margaret G. Carter
  - *President, Area 4A Council PTA*
- Mr. George Cheely
  - *Capitol Hill Community Council*
- Mrs. Geraldine S. Chiles
  - *Chairman, Library Committee, PTA Burroughs School*
- Mr. John H. Clark
  - *PTA Heurst School*
- Mrs. Edward E. Cornwell, Jr.
  - *PTA Shepherd School*
  - *Counselor Aide, Morgan School, Urban Service Corps*
- The Rt. Rev. William Creighton
  - *Bishop of Washington, Mount Saint Alban*
- Miss Wave Elaine Culver
  - *Action Committee for D. C. School Libraries*
- Mr. Jack Ellenberger
  - *Librarian, Covington & Burling*
  - *Chairman, D.C.L.A. Legislation Committee*

Mrs. Rashi Fein
PTA, John Eaton School
Chairman, Library Committee, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education

Mrs. Shirley C. Fisk
Chairman, School Volunteer Committee and Member, Executive Committee, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education

Mrs. Ben W. Gilbert
Former Volunteer Librarian, Simmons School

The Reverend William Lloyd Goodrich
Rector, St. James Episcopal Church

Mr. Benjamin Henley
Assistant Superintendent, D. C. Public Schools, and Director of Urban Service Corps

Mrs. Harold Howe, II
Board, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education
Coordinator for Volunteer School Library Aides, Urban Service Corps

Mrs. Hamilton W. Kenner
Action Committee for D. C. School Libraries
U. of Md. Lecturer in Library School

Mrs. Aaron Kimchi
PTA Lafayette School

Miss Carmella La Spada
President's Council on Youth Opportunity

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Former President, LaSalle School PTA

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Supervising Director, Reading Clinic, D. C. Public Schools

Miss Edith Lyons
Retired Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education, D. C. Public Schools

Mrs. Charles H. Mayer
Volunteer Librarian, Ludlow School

Mrs. James M. Newmyer
D. C. Public Library Board

Mrs. Rosetta J. Payton
PTA River Terrace School
Reading Aide, Urban Service Corps

Mrs. Lois W. Proctor
Counselor, Houston School
Area 4A Council, PTA

Mrs. Charles M. Rodgers
Neighbors, Inc.
Membership Chairman, D. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers

Mrs. A. E. Rowse
Education Chairman, D. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers
Co-Chairman, Elementary Library Book Processing Project

Miss Edith Saul
League of Women Voters, Chairman, Library Committee, Former Librarian with D. C. Public Libraries

Mrs. Eleanor B. Smollar, Co-chairman
Vice President, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education, Coordinator, Reading Aides, Urban Service Corps

Mrs. Omagean H. Stewart
Library Committee, PTA Burroughs School

Mrs. Peter Sturtevant
Project Research Chairman, Jr. League of Washington

Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson
Chairman, Library Committee, D. C. Congress of Parents and Teachers

Mrs. Joseph C. Waddy
Reading Aide, Urban Service Corps

Mrs. Amanda Williams
Action Committee for D. C. School Libraries

Mrs. Erastine P. Williams
President, PTA Gage School

Miss Hazel Wilson
Author of Children's Books
Book Reviewer
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Mrs. Loudon Wingo, Jr.
Counselor and Aide, Urban Service Corps

Mrs. Henrietta Wright
Past President, PTA Beers School
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Mr. Henry C. Fleisher
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Mr. James Newmyer
Newmyer Associates

Mrs. Stina Santiestevan
Board, D. C. Citizens for Better Public Education

Mr. Leslie C. Shomo
President, Mid-Atlantic Division, The McCall Printing Co.

Appendix B

Pre-pack List of Books

Pre-pack A	— 75 Shape Books (Golden)	3 ea. of 25 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack B	— 51 Wonder Books (G&D)	3 ea. of 17 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack C	— 60 Easy Readers (G&D)	3 ea. of 20 titles	— Grades 2-5
Pre-pack D	— 42 Tempo Books (G&D)	2 ea. of 21 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack E	— 39 Scholastics	3 ea. of 13 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack F	— 32 Scholastics	4 ea. of 8 titles	— Grades K-4
Pre-pack G	— 44 Scholastics	4 ea. of 11 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack H	— 72 Activity Assortment (Golden)	12 ea. of 6 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack J	— 34 Scholastics	2 ea. of 17 titles	— Grades 5-6
Pre-pack K	— 26 How & Why (G&D)	1 ea. of 26 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack L	— 36 How & Why (G&D)	2 ea. of 18 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack M	— 36 Wonder Books (G&D)	2 ea. of 18 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack N	— 30 Science Series (Saalfield)	5 ea. of 6 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack P	—144 Little Golden Books	12 ea. of 12 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack Q	— 12 Lantern Books (Curtis)	4 ea. of 3 titles	— Grades 5-6
Pre-pack R	— 20 The American Negro Spotlight (G&D)	20 ea. of 1 title	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack S	— 20 Merrigold Books (Golden)	2 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack T	— 18 Wonder Read Alouds (G&D) and 5 Voyager (H B&W)	1 ea. of 23 titles	— Grades 2-6
Pre-pack V	— 25 Harlin Quist Books (Dell)	5 ea. of 5 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack W	— 30 Tempo Books (G&D)	3 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack X	— 16 Sturdy Shape Books (McGraw-Hill)	2 ea. of 8 titles	— Grades K-2
Pre-pack Y	— 12 Voyager Books (H B&W)	3 ea. of 4 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack Z	— 40 Yearling Books (Dell)	5 ea. of 8 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack FA	— 24 Fun & Activity Books (G&D)	4 ea. of 6 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack LB	— 18 Laugh Books (G&D)	3 ea. of 6 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack SB	— 40 Scholastics	7 titles	— Grades K-4
Pre-pack BSS	— 40 Scholastics	4 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack AA	— 48 Scholastics	4 ea. of 12 titles	— Grades K-4
Pre-pack BB	— 72 Scholastics	3 ea. of 24 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack CC	— 30 Voyager Books (H B&W)	3 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack DD	— 12 Tempo Books (G&D)	3 ea. of 4 titles	— Grades 5-6
Pre-pack EE	— 30 Batman (Signet)	10 ea. of 3 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack FF	— 10 McGraw-Hill	5 ea. of 2 titles	— Grades 5-6
Pre-pack GG	— 10 Voyager Books (H B&W)	5 ea. of 2 titles	— Grades 5-6
Pre-pack HH	— 40 Coloring and Activity Books (Golden)	10 ea. of 4 titles	— Grades K-3
Pre-pack JJ	— 20 Scholastic Sports	5 ea. of 4 titles	— Grades 3-6
Pre-pack KK	— 25 Science Workbooks (Golden)	5 ea. of 5 titles	— Grades 2-4
Pre-pack LL	— 20 Nancy Drew (G&D)	2 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack MM	— 20 Cherry Ames (G&D)	2 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades 4-6
Pre-pack NN	— 20 The Hardy Boys (G&D)	2 ea. of 10 titles	— Grades 3-6

Pre-pack PP	40 Scholastics (cooking and sewing)	10 ea. of 4 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack RR	10 Fun and Activity (G&D)	5 ea. of 2 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack SS	48 Finding Out About Science (Golden)	4 ea. of 12 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack TT	18 Picture Dictionaries (Golden)	18 ea. of 1 title	Grades 1-3
Pre-pack WW	24 Scholastics	1 ea. of 24 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack XX	20 Scholastics	2 ea. of 10 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack YY	30 Fun and Activity Books (Doubleday)	6 ea. of 5 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack ZZ	24 Early Start Readers (G&D)	3 ea. of 8 titles	Grades K-3
Pre-pack AAA	12 Avon	3 ea. of 4 titles	Grades 5-6
Pre-pack BBB	27 Zenith (Doubleday)	3 ea. of 9 titles	Grades 5-6
Pre-pack CCC	40 Crest Books (Fawcett)	4 ea. of 10 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack DDD	54 Scholastics	2 ea. of 27 titles	Grades K-4
Pre-pack EEE	46 Scholastics	2 ea. of 23 titles	Grades 4-6
Pre-pack FFF	34 Scholastics (science)	2 ea. of 17 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack GGG	32 Early Start Readers (G&D)	4 ea. of 8 titles	Grades K-3
Pre-pack HHH	42 Read Alouds (G&D)	3 ea. of 14 titles	Grades 2-6
Pre-pack JJJ	46 Wonder Books (G&D)	2 ea. of 23 titles	Grades K-4
Pre-pack KKK	10 John F. Kennedy (G&D Spotlight)	10 ea. of 1 title	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack LLL	144 Little Goldens	12 ea. of 12 titles	Grades K-3
Pre-pack MMM	16 Science and Dictionary (Golden)	4 ea. of 4 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack NNN	30 Treasure Coloring Books (G&D)	3 ea. of 10 titles	Grades K-3
Pre-pack PPP	20 Capitol and White House (G&D Spotlight)	10 ea. of 2 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack QQQ	52 Scholastics	4 ea. of 13 titles	Grades 4-6
Pre-pack SSS	40 Scholastics	2 ea. of 20 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack TTT	10 Baseball Funbooks (Doubleday)	10 ea. of 1 title	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack UUU	30 Scholastics	2 ea. of 15 titles	Grades 5-6
Pre-pack VVV	30 Maxton Dot Books (Follett)	6 ea. of 5 titles	Grades 1-3
Pre-pack WWW	25 Maxton Puzzle Books (Follett)	5 ea. of 5 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack XXX	9 Harlin Quist Books (Dell)	3 ea. of 3 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack YYY	20 Wonder Fun and Activity Books (G&D)	5 ea. of 4 titles	Grades 2-6
Pre-pack ZZZ	15 Maxton Advanced Puzzles (Follett)	5 ea. of 3 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack MBA	28 Maxton Special Interest Books (Follett)	2 ea. of 14 titles	Grades 3-6
Pre-pack AEP	55 American Education Publications, Inc.	5 ea. of 11 titles	Grades K-6

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Appendix C

A Discussion of the RIF Book List (School Program)

The RIF book list, which contains over 600 titles, may be obtained from the Reading Is Fun-damental Committee, Suite 1207, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Washington, D. C. 20036. Information about the publisher, price and estimated reading and interest level is included in the list.

The book list, however, may be of only limited value. Each community group needs to determine the interests of the children it will be serving. These interests will vary throughout the country. Also new titles are being added to paper-back lists by publishers each year.

Books ranging in level from kindergarten through 6th grade were selected with the objective of appealing to the wide variety of tastes and interests of the children we were serving. TV and other communication media have introduced children to mature and sophisticated information and experiences, as well as to comic entertainment. It is often difficult to find books that meet these interests and are also at a level the children can read.

For K-3 grade levels we provided selected titles of: Wonder Books (Grossett and Dunlap); Shape Books (Golden Press); Early Start Readers (G&D); Merrigold (Golden Press); Easy Readers (G&D); Scholastic Book Service books listed under Grades 1-3 Reading Level; and a variety of activity and coloring books which provided learning experiences as well as fun.

Of the Wonder Books, *Dinny, Big Little Dinosaur* and *Popeye* were most popular at first, probably because of familiarity from TV. Titles about animals, especially rabbits around Easter, and many other subjects became increasingly popular. The same proved true of Shape Books, with *Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse,* and *Winnie the Pooh* having most appeal at first. Early Start Readers are colorful, well constructed and popular, especially with teachers of younger children. Merrigold books are attractive activity books which children in the upper grades enjoyed as much as the younger ones. This was also true of some of the Wonder Books.

Activity and coloring books were frequently attractive to older children—probably because many had missed the experience of owning books like these when they were younger. A number of Easy Readers are excellent and have appeal for older children reading at low levels. These books would have been more popular if they weren't designated "Easy Readers". Many 4th graders seemed embarrassed, or were teased, when they selected them. The same is true of books with "little children" symbols on them that would otherwise be of interest to upper grade children and at their reading level.

Included in a special purchase from American Education Publications were several delightful and popular books for children of all ages. Two titles, *I Can Fly* and *Red Is Never a Mouse,* were very much in demand by the younger set.

Snowy Day (Scholastic), a beautifully illustrated charming story, was the favorite of many youngsters. However, its appeal tended to be seasonal; this of course was true of all holiday and season-oriented books.

At the 3-6 Grade level, science books were most popular. "How and Why" books (G&D) rated highest, probably because of the abundance of excellent pictures and illustrations. *Dinosaurs, Prehistoric Mammals,* and *Primitive Man* shared in popularity with *Rockets and Missiles, Scientific Experiments* and outer space titles. The "How and Why" books with historical titles such as *The Civil War, The North American Indian, The First World War* were also much in demand. "How and Why" books rarely turned up in surplus stock returned from a distribution.

The "Finding Out About Science" Series (Golden Press) is colorful and well illustrated, and it appealed both to children and teachers. Scholastic science books are excellent but were not as popular—possibly because they did not contain as many colorful pictures and illustrations. Several titles, however, were quite popular, such as: *Magnets and How to Use Them* (attached to the book was a small magnet), *How Animals Sleep, How to Be a Nature Detective,* and *How to Care for Your Dog.*

A series of excellent beautifully illustrated "Special Interest" Books (Follett) contained titles much in demand such as: *Space Travel, Children of the World, Music,* and *Ballet.*

For the boys, sports was always a popular subject. Books titled *How to Star in Baseball, . . . Football, . . . Basketball, . . . Track* (all Scholastic) were favored over stories about sports and biographies of famous athletes; however, *Willie Mays* and *Yogi Berra* (both G&D Tempo) had a large following of fans.

Cooking, sewing, and career books were popular subjects with the girls. The Arrow Book of Nurses (Scholastic) was as interesting to mothers as it was to the girls.

Mystery books were in demand. Most popular in this category were selected titles of Nancy Drew, Cherry Ames and the Hardy Boys (all G&D). RIF had a problem with the many inquiries of the children as to where they could find more of these books to read. No D. C. School or Public library had them on their shelves. They have to be purchased and have recently increased in price to $1.50.

There was a good deal of interest in biographies, especially at the 4-6 grade level. *Pioneers and Patriots, Lift Every Voice* and *Four Took Freedom* (all Doubleday Zenith) were popular with older children and teachers. So were *Marian Anderson* and *Mrs. LBJ* (both Avon). In greatest demand was the well illustrated *John F. Kennedy* Spotlight (G&D).

The Dell Yearling series contains excellent titles and is very well done. Only the biographies, however, were popular. The fiction books for the most part did not appeal to the children RIF was serving.

Historical titles were frequently chosen, especially when they related to current school studies. For this reason, books

New Collectio
of
Children's Books

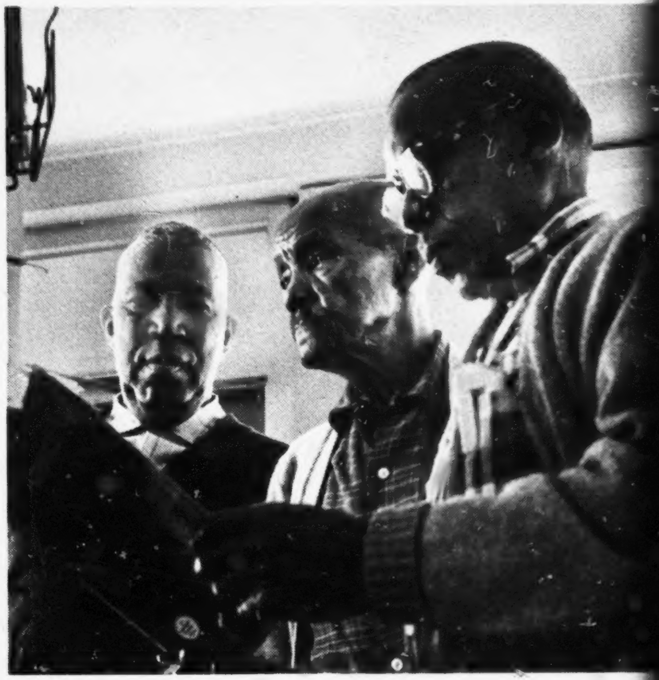
such as *In Colonial Times* and *Men Who Won the West* (both Scholastic) were in demand at many schools.

The single most popular book in this category was *The American Negro* (G&D Spotlight). Other frequently chosen titles were *The Capitol, The White House* (both G&D Spotlight); *Worth Fighting For, The Unfinished March*, and *Time of Trial, Time of Hope* (all Doubleday Zenith).

Fun and Activity books were extremely popular. Grosset & Dunlop, Scholastic, Follett, and Golden had excellent series in this category. *Peanuts* and *Charlie Brown* (Fawcett) vied in popularity with *Batman* (Signet).

Books of verse and poetry were frequently requested. Not enough well-illustrated, good poetry books are available in inexpensive paperbacks. The Dell Harquist series contains some of the best, but they are a little too sophisticated for many elementary school children.

Taste in fiction varied widely. At first many children selected a title because a friend had taken it. In later distributions these same children tended to select different titles and share their books. Many titles attracted children because of a



American Negro

name or word in it with which they had some association—frequently their own name. TV and movies influenced many choices, such as: *The Wizard of Oz, Lassie Comes Home,* and *PT 109.* Of two excellent books about Negro children, *Mary Jane* was very popular, *Roosevelt Grady* much less so. This may have to do with the difference in tastes of boys and girls of the same age, or the fact that *Roosevelt Grady* is about a boy in a rural setting.

Books with small print and no illustrations were bypassed by children of all ages for those with colorful pictures, illustrations and larger type.

RIF believes there is no "best" list of books for a given group of children. Meeting the interests of the children should be of prime importance. A wide variety of titles and types of books that will attract and appeal to children should be included in every distribution. If only books that are considered good literature by adults are offered, a great many children may miss out on this wonderful opportunity to learn that Reading is Fun. □

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